A FEAST OF FICTION.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 474. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 29TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.

"Kola is not a food. . . . Kola is not harmless."

—MEDICAL WORLD.

CADBURY's Cocoa is entirely free from all admixtures, such as Kola, Malt, Hops, Alkali, etc., and the Public should insist on having the Pure, Genuine article.

CADBURY's Cocoa is "A Perfect Food."

EXTRACT FROM AN OPINION BY DR. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E.

(Combe and Gilchrist Lecturer, etc.), expressed by him in a Lecture on Foods:

"I am distinctly of opinion that the modern tendency to add to Cocoa other substances, mostly of a stimulating nature, is a dietetic mistake, a practice to be thoroughly discouraged. **If you have a pure Cocoa you want nothing else in the way of constituting it a food, for it contains in itself all the principles which go to make up a perfect article of diet.** When people begin to add to Cocoa, Hops and Kola and other things, they are interfering with and altering its dietetic value. Cocoa thus treated is not Cocoa but something else, and I have declined for my part, in all my long advocacy of Cocoa as a food to recognise that **anything but pure unadulterated Cocoa can correspond with this definition of a perfect and desirable diet.** I hope the time is not far distant when the public will awaken to a knowledge of the fact that 'doctored' cocoa is not a thing to be recommended or advised as a food."

CADBURY'S COCOA

IS ABSOLUTELY PURE, AND A PERFECT FOOD.

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"Its food value is double that of Bread made from ordinary wheaten flour."—Lancet.

HOVIS BREAD

will not only help to improve your digestion and consequently your health, but will also bring back that energetic and happy feeling of good health. Man does not live a natural life, so a good portion of a natural food, in the shape of HOVIS, at each meal will largely counteract the bad influence that modern life has upon the health and digestive organs. This is not an idle remark, but a proved statement, daily being verified.

HOVIS is baked and sold by all good class Bakers. No loaf genuine unless stamped HOVIS. 6d. and 1/- samples of Bread and Biscuits sent on receipt of stamps by

S. FITTON & SON, Millers, Macclesfield.

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Tower Coffee.
Tower Cocoa.

IN PACKETS AND TINS ONLY.
SOLD EVERYWHERE.

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FOR ALL
BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS
SUCH AS
Sick Headache, Constipation,
Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,
Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.
SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.
In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.
Prepared only by the Proprietor,
THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.
Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

MAKE FRUIT WINES AT HOME.
Ask for MASON'S.

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. THE VERY BEST.

MASON'S GINGER WINE ESSENCE.
A Sixpenny Bottle will, in six minutes, make sixty glasses of Delicious, Non-Alcoholic Wine.
Agents Wanted.
NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.
MASON'S (NOTTINGHAM) COFFEE ESSENCE (THE BEST MADE)

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES
are made in all Fruit Flavours, Ginger, Lemon, Orange, Blackberry, etc.
YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED.

MAKERS OF MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS. BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

SHORT STORIES

No. 474.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending January 29th, 1898.

The Mysterious Figures.

One day last January I received the following cablegram from Messrs. Radix and Pollen, of Rotterdam, Holland:

Will you go to Guiana for us? Come if "yes."

Messrs. Radix and Pollen import roots, barks, herbs, and dyewoods from South America; in fact their house is the leading one in that line in Europe. I had been on botanical excursions to South America for this firm several times before. I therefore took it for granted that the telegram referred to a similar commission.

As they had cabled their inquiry I knew that they desired no delay, so an hour later my answer,

Coming on *Hollandia*.

was on the wires. Two days later I sailed for Rotterdam.

Arrived there, I immediately called at the office of Radix and Pollen. After the usual introductory phrases about the trip over, the weather, and our respective good healths, we proceeded to business.

"You were no doubt surprised," said Pollen, "at our cablegram? Our business is so important, however, that we want it taken in hand without delay.

"With the last vessel from our factory on the Surinam we received a letter from our superintendent there; in it he stated that an Indian, one of the Galibis from the lower Maroni river, had called at the factory for a few days, always more or less drunk. In the course of a talk the superintendent had with him the Indian said that he knew of a tract of rosewood trees several miles in extent.

"From his talk our people there could not determine whether the tract was on Dutch ground or over the river in French Guiana. As a great sum of money was eventually involved, the superintendent concluded to keep the Indian at the factory (to prevent him from talking to other parties) until he heard from us.

"We think the matter worth investigation, and concluded to send you over to do so.

"Our steamer, the *Cortex*, will be ready to sail in about a week. Get your things ready and go out in her. The business may be settled in a few months, it may take longer, and it may be that the Indian lied altogether. Go and see what you can do. We have obtained a blank grant from the Dutch government, so that if the tract exists we can pre-empt immediately."

My preparation for the trip was soon made. Everything necessary for the work in the forest I could obtain at the factory. I only needed a supply of necessaries for the long ocean voyage.

These "factories," as the trading stations are called, are simply storage houses established by the European traders

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at convenient points along the coast. Here the natives bring their gold, ivory, skins, roots, dyewoods, etc., and exchange them for rum, cast-iron knives, more rum, calico, brass wire, more rum, obsolete fire-arms and other European commodities. Messrs Radix and Pollen had three such factories on the Guiana coast.

In due time the *Cortex* sailed and arrived at Paramaribo after a long and somewhat tedious trip. At Paramaribo we discharged freight for that port and then continued along the coast to the mouth of the Maroni river. Here the factory was situated to which I was des ined.

At the factory my arrangements were soon made. Indian carriers were selected, supplies to last us for three months were packed, guns and revolvers were examined, cartridge belts filled, and the thousand and one other things attended to that were necessary to insure the safety of an expedition into a South American forest.

After a week's hard work we were ready, and started upon our tramp into the forest.

Week after week we toiled on, chopping our way through the inextricable mass of tangled vines, creepers, roots, and undergrowth of the primeval forests, harassed by ants whose bite raised a blister the size of an hazel-nut, dreading to set foot on the ground for fear of treading on a snake, and yet fearing to keep the eyes fixed upon the ground for dread of walking into a snake hanging from a branch, like a whipthong discarded by a driver, or like a piece of huge cable, able to crush the largest beast in its folds.

If we came to a clear, cool stream flowing temptingly in the shades of the forest, we hardly dared bathe in it for fear of the gymnotus—the electric eel—whose shock, while not always fatal, is always very unpleasant.

And then, after passing the day with every nerve strained to its highest tension, when night came it was necessary to wrap one's self up very carefully lest some unprotected part of the body attract a vampire. These hideous bats settled themselves noiselessly upon the exposed neck, hand, arm or other part of the body, and insert their lancet-like sucker under the skin of the unfortunate.

After filling themselves with blood they flit silently away into the forest, leaving the wound open. Then, when the traveller awakes, he is generally so weak from loss of blood that very often he can no longer bear up successfully against the equatorial fevers.

At last, however, we came to the end of our journey. After battling for five weeks with the tropical vegetable and animal world we came, as the Indian had said, to a veritable forest of rosewood trees. As we saw later, the edge of the forest was but a few miles from the river.

After having satisfied myself as to the extent of the grove, exact location, distance from the river and best route to the river, I set the Indian carriers to work making a canoe, as I intended to return to the factory by way of the river.

While enjoying a brief rest and a pipe on the river bank, I carelessly examined the rocks rising in a dense mass from the river, and was startled to see the figure of an arrow carved deeply into the rocks a few feet above my head. Naturally, I asked myself why the arrow was there. Cleaning the face of the rock from vines and moss I followed up the direction indicated by the arrow. Foot by foot I scanned the surface until I saw a place where an opening about a foot square in the rock had been closed with a stone, roughly chipped to fit the opening. This stone cover was wedged into place tightly with several large iron spikes.

Returning to camp, I got a small axe and then proceeded to remove the stone lid. After working for half-an-hour I succeeded in removing one of the spikes; with it I displaced the others, and finally probed out the covering stone, disclosing an opening about a foot deep, in which lay a large copper powder flask.

On shaking the flask it seemed to be empty, and I was about to throw it into the river when I thought I might as well open it. As it was impossible to remove the screw cap, I chopped off the head of the flask and saw that the flask only contained a tightly rolled paper.

Upon unrolling the paper I saw that it was covered with writing; this, after studying it for half-an-hour, I was enabled to read.

It was a letter, signed Yan Kerkenberg, giving instructions to some one coming after him.

The letter described how the writer had left his vessel at anchor at the mouth of the river, and how he had made the trip up the river in a rowing-boat. From the landing place at the rock, where I had found the flask, the diamond mines, according to the Indian guide, were distant in the direction given, inland, a journey of about two weeks.

In case the party following should not meet Kerkenberg on the road coming or going, he would cruise along the coast the stated time and then return to Dykendorp.

So much for the letter. From the coating of patina on the flask and the faded appearance of the writing, I judged that many years had passed since the flask had been placed in the rock by some hardy adventurer in search of wealth.

As soon as our canoe was finished I took two of the carriers and started down the river to the factory; the rest of the men I left at the camp in charge of one of the whites from the factory who had accompanied us.

Arrived at the factory, we soon had all arrangements made to send a force of men up the river to the camp; then, for myself, there remained nothing else to do but wait in patience until the *Cortex* returned.

One evening I mentioned my find in the rock to the superintendent of the factory, and was astonished to hear that he had heard of Kerkenberg.

"Yan Kerkenberg," said he, "was one of two brothers who carried on a promiscuous kind of a sea trade, chiefly between Holland and our coast here. This was long before my time, however. I heard one version of the story shortly after I came here, some twenty years ago, from the older among the Indians. Later I heard more of the story from the authorities at Cayenne, so I think I have it about right.

"Well, each of the two Kerkenbergs commanded a small vessel; they bought, or stole, and sold slaves and

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anything or everything they could convert into money. It seems that they also did a little bit of piracy now and then. At any rate the authorities at Cayenne, some forty years ago, accused the two brothers of a long list of crimes, hung the one brother Diederick, on general principals, and confiscated his ship and cargo. The other brother Yan, was known to be off the coast hereabouts at the same time, but after the hanging of his brother he disappeared. They said at that time that he had left here for fear his vessel would be confiscated also, but it seems, from the letter that you have found, that he went up the river.

"Perhaps he returned. I doubt it, however. From what you have just gone through in the last weeks you know it is a huge undertaking to penetrate into the woods, provided with all help possible. For a seaman to go in, accompanied by only a lot of sailors, is simply to hand himself over to the snakes, Indians, or starvation.

"I think Yan's bones are lying in the woods somewhere, and that his ship waited a certain time at the river mouth for him. As he failed to appear again, the ship no doubt put to sea without him. At any rate his ship never returned to this part of the coast.

"His name, by-the-way, was Churchill. He was an Englishman, and had merely changed his name into a kind of Dutch and called himself Kerkenberg. He no doubt had reasons for so doing. I suppose in his wanderings up and down the coast, Kerkenberg heard of diamond mines in the interior and started out to find them. If he did not die on the road from other causes he was most assuredly killed and robbed by the Indians."

On the home trip, when the *Cortex* stopped at Cayenne, I looked over the records there and saw that Diederick Kerkenberg had really been hanged there for piracy, and that search had been instituted at the same time for Yan, without results, however.

Upon the arrival of the *Cortex* at Rotterdam I reported at the offices of Messrs. Radix and Pollen, settled our business relations, and then started on a short tramp afoot through part of Holland before returning to New York. On my tramp I had Kerkenberg again called to mind by stumbling into a village called Dykendorp.

Prompted by idle curiosity, I asked my landlord if he had heard anything of a mariner called Kerkenberg many years before.

"Kerkenberg!" said he, folding his hands over his breast and gazing reverently at the ceiling, "do I know anything of him? I do, God keep him in grace for ever and let the kingdom of Holland prosper! Why, man, they eat his annual dinner right here in this house every 4th of August. We will always think of Kerkenberg, at least so long as the kingdom of Holland exists."

Later in the evening, over a pipe and a glass, the landlord told me the following story:

"Yan and Diederick Kerkenberg were merchant sailors who sailed from here for many years. They traded between here and South America. They generally came into port here about the same time and always sailed away together.

"Once, so my father, who knew them both, told me, Diederick left port suddenly before Yan was ready. A few weeks after Diederick had sailed Yan called to the town council together and told them that he wished the town to remember his name for ever. As he and his brother stood alone in the world he had arranged matters so that the town itself would see to it that his name should not be forgotten. For this purpose he had purchased a plot of ground in the village churchyard. In this plot he had placed a slab of granite with the name of Kerkenberg cut upon it; the plot he had had inclosed with an iron railing.

"Then he deeded 1,000 florins to the town upon the following conditions:

"The money was to be placed out at interest three-quarters of the interest obtained was to be used in providing an annual banquet of the town officials, the minister, the school teacher and whatever guests the town officials might see fit to invite.

"This banquet is to take place every year on the 4th of August. My house has been honoured by having the last ten held in it.

"This bauquet is to be held, provided that the sexton hands to the burgomaster, one week before its date, a written statement that he has looked after the Kerkenberg plot during the year, and has kept it in order, the fence painted, and the slab clean. For this labour and expense the sexton was to receive the remaining quarter of the annual interest."

The next morning I called upon the burgomaster, and heard the same story from him, and was shown the original deed of gift to the village.

This deed is in the form of a letter, and is addressed to his brother, Diederick, also called Richard Churchill. It is written on heavy paper, in Dutch, and is witnessed by the burgomaster and village attorney of that time for Dykendorp and by Yan Kerkenberg, also called John Churchill, and one of his mates for Kerkenberg.

On turning the deed in my hands, while listening to the burgomaster, I noticed a row of figures on the back of it. On calling the burgomaster's attention to the figures, he told me that they had always been there. He supposed that Kerkenberg had written his deed on a sheet of paper without examining it first, and that the figures had been on the sheet before the deed was written.

At any rate the figures were there, and as they did not interfere with the annual dinner, it was really not worth while giving them a second thought.

As the deed was such a peculiar one I asked permission to copy it, this was readily granted. While copying it I thought of the figures on the back and copied them also.

In due course of time I finished my tramp and returned to Rotterdam. There I took passage in one of the steamers for New York.

By chance there were only a few cabin passengers on board on that trip; as they were either too old or too young for company for me, I was thrown upon my own resources to kill time.

One day, while hunting for a novel in my trunk, I saw my copy of the deed and took it on deck to read it over

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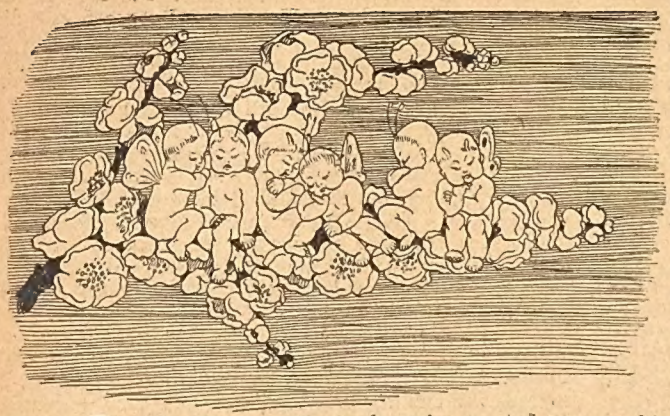

again. Then the figures on the back again arrested my attention. I was positive that the figures had been placed there intentionally and that they had some ulterior meaning.

But why were they placed there and what did they mean? But, first of all, here are the figures: 1139, 4185, 4142, 1582, 0514, 1520, 1914, 8151, 0.

Settling myself in a quiet corner, I lit my pipe and proceeded to cross-question myself about it as follows:

"Why are the figures on the deed?"

"Because somebody put them there."

"Good," thought I, "now we are progressing."

"Who put them there?"

Here the progress came to a dead stop.

From the care with which official documents are treated in Europe and the veneration the people there have for such a paper, with its red seals, I decided, most emphatically, that the figures had not been upon the document after it became one.

At the time the deed was written a nice big sheet of clean paper was not thrown about in a Dutch village dwelling and scribbled upon carelessly, simply because such a sheet was rarer and more expensive then than now. Consequently, I took it for granted that the figures had been put upon the paper before it was converted into a deed, intentionally.

If this was the case then Yan Kerkenberg was the one who put the figures there.

Let us take for granted and continue questioning.

Why did he put them on the deed?

Well, surely not out of mere fun of scribbling! Men of his class do not waste time in that way.

Perhaps it was a message?

To whom?

Well, as the deed of gift is in the form of a letter to his brother, why should not these figures represent some message or codicil intended for that same brother?

If Diederick returned to Dykendorp before Yan he would of course hear of the deed immediately; as it was addressed to him he would of course read it! Then he would naturally see the figures! if they were intended for him, he would of course know how to decipher them.

If it was a message of some kind from Yan to Diederick, it was of such a nature that it was intended only for him, it was of importance and value.

As the brothers were English, and as the message was left in Dutch hands, it was most likely that it was couched in English. Now I took it for granted, from the two samples of Yan's handwriting that I had seen, that his education had been carried just far enough to enable him to write a few lines when necessity absolutely required it; consequently, if Yan had made use of a cypher he had used the simplest kind he could invent. Now one of the simplest cyphers consists in replacing the letters of the alphabet by figures, taking one for A, two for B, three for C, and so on.

Following out this theory, I obtained the following: 1139, 4185, 4142, 1582, 0514, 1520, 1914, 8151, 0, DAHE, DADB, AEHB, EAD.

Here I was compelled to stop. The nought upset my theory. Then I started over again, commencing with 0, 1, 2, etc.

On this basis I worked for two days without results, or rather with negative results.

At last I started with my first arrangement, and said that the nought in the fifth block of figures belonged to the 2 in the proceeding block, making 20; this would then represent the letter T.

From that point I worked forward and backward, and then had my letters and figures, grouped as follows:

11, 3, 9, 4, 18, 5, 4, 14, 21, 5, 8, 20, 5, 14, 15, 20, 19, 14, 8, 15, 10: K, C, I, D, E, D, N, U, E, H, T, E, N, O, E, S, N, H, O, J.

Returning to the original grouping I got:

KCID, REDNU, EHT, ENOTS, NHOJ.

One step farther showed me that the first four letters, reversed in position, gave the word:

"DICK"

Then I shouted "Hurrah!" and went down below, and interviewed—well, I went below and came on deck again feeling somewhat better. (The Dutch mail steamers carry a brand of Chateau Margeau that is really exquisite.)

Having my entering wedge, I easily pried the letters into the right position; transposed they gave:

DICK UNDER THE STONE JOHN.

Hurrah, and hurrah again! John had hidden something *under the stone* for Dick. There was only one stone that could be meant, and that was the granite slab in Yan's plot in the churchyard.

The "something" that was there must be of value, as Yan had paid one thousand florins to the town in order to have it guarded for him; no doubt booty acquired by the brothers in their voyages.

For the present I could do nothing but think and make plans as each revolution of the screw was driving the steamer, and me with it, farther away from Holland.

By the time I arrived in New York I had made up my mind to return to Holland.

Leaving the Dutch steamer immediately upon its arrival at New York, I boarded one of the fast liners and steamed off the next day for England. From there I crossed the Channel to Holland, and, after making a few purchases in Rotterdam, took the first train for Dykendorp.

There I rented a small cottage, telling the landlord that I expected two cousins, who would stay with me for a few weeks. I told the people that I would stay a couple of months in the place to study Dutch.

For a week or so I walked about, showing myself everywhere in the place, talked broken Dutch to old and young, and told them where I came from, what I was doing in the village, how long I intended to remain, how old I was, and in fact, satisfied their curiosity in every way.

After two weeks the villagers ceased to bother me

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with questions. They counted me as one of them and paid no particular attention to me; this was just what I had laboured to attain.

Not knowing how deep I would be compelled to dig under the stone, and knowing that I would have only one night to dig in, I practised digging in the cellar of my cottage until I could handle my short coal miner's pick and spade like a veteran.

As good luck would have it, I had been enabled to rent a cottage on the outskirts of the village. The garden belonging to the cottage was bounded by the churchyard wall. This enabled me to pass from my cottage into the churchyard with very little risk of being seen.

It was now only necessary for me to wait for a suitable night. This came sooner than I had hoped. A heavy wind started in the afternoon, and by supper time it was blowing great guns in from sea. An hour after the streets of the village were dead and deserted.

Now was my time. Taking my tools, I hurried through the garden, jumped over the low churchyard wall, and a minute later I was in Yan Kerkenberg's grounds.

There I sat down and listened. The clock in the church tower started to strike the hours. Although but a few hundred feet away, I could barely hear the deep booming of the bell through the howling of the wind and the roar of the surf on the beach.

Then I went to work. I dug down about two feet deep along one side of the stone and then I started to dig under it; the rain beat upon me and soon had me wet to the skin; the wind swayed the trees to and fro and whistled in shrill tones among them. I neither felt the rain nor heard the wind. I dug, dug, dug, till I thought my back would break and my arms fall off.

At last my spade gave back a hollow sound as I forced it into the earth. Then I forgot back, arms, wind, rain —everything but my digging. Soon I had laid bare one side and the ends of a small chest. A few sharp blows with a short, heavy steel bar broke in the side of the chest enough to enable me to thrust my hand into it. This I did, and felt that the chest contained, seemingly, bricks, covered with heavy canvas! A few wrenches with the bar broke out the entire side of the box, and I proceeded to take out the contents.

One after another my trembling hands pulled out the "bricks"—one, two, three, four, five and so on until the chest was empty, then I had twenty-one heavy little bricks lying beside me on the ground. Loading myself with as many as I could carry, I hastened to the dividing wall, and threw them over into my garden. Four times I made the trip, and then I proceeded to fill up the hole I had made.

After that I returned to the garden and carried my bricks into the house. There I saw that my bricks were gold ignots, each weighing about twelve pounds.

With the first glimpse of dawn I returned to the churchyard and obliterated the traces of my digging. As the plot outside of the granite slab, had been covered with shells and gravel, I succeeded beyond my expectations. The rain that still came down soon washed the adhering earth from the shells and gravel and made it difficult to detect traces of my work.

I had now over two hundred and fifty pounds of gold to carry away from the village. The next question was to get it away immediately and without suspicion. To do this I adopted the following plan. From a dealer in the village I purchased several hundred small glazed tiles, telling him I might want to use them some day to fit up my bathroom. I ordered him to purchase a heavy chest for me to ship them in and to send the chest and tiles to my house.

This he did. Then I packed the ingots securely in the chest, the tiles I buried in the cellar.

The next morning I shipped my chest to Rotterdam; as the tile dealer's men took the chest to the railway station, the weight did not cause any remarks, as they took it for granted that the chest contained the tiles I had purchased from their master.

In Rotterdam I sold the ingots, receiving eleven thousand pounds for the same.

Although Yan Kerkenberg had stated himself that he and his brother stood alone in the world, I had extensive inquiries made through a firm of lawyers in Rotterdam for eventual heirs.

They found that the two Churchills had come from Bourneham in England, but could discover no direct or indirect heirs.

Through the same legal firm I then had one thousand pounds deeded to the village of Dykendorp, the interest of this sum to be given annually, on Yan Kerkenberg's day, to those fishers of the village who had suffered loss at sea during the year, or who, in consequence of poor fishing, had need of aid.

* * * * *

I have now given up travelling in equatorial regions, but I often think that the stone that Kerkenberg *really* meant was the one on the river bank in Guiana.

Should I go there again? Did the arrow mean more than to point to the hiding place of the flask? Who can tell?

H. C. STIEFEL.

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Look out for our GRAND NEW SERIAL Next Week.

Mr. Krell's Million.

It was about nine o'clock on Christmas Eve. The lights were burning unusually late in Mr. Krell's office, for Dakins, the book-keeper, was getting off the balance-sheet. He had just summed up the final column and was meditating over the row of figures before him, when Mr. Krell entered from his private room.

"Well, Dakins," said he, "have you finished?"

"Yes, sir, it's all ready for you," answered the other, "and I think you will be very much pleased with the result. I congratulate you, sir, on your fortune at last reaching seven figures."

"Ah," said Mr. Krell simply. He was not a demonstrative man, but for a moment his features relaxed their customary rigidity, and he seemed about to give away to a feeling of joy. He quickly recovered himself, however, and, as if ashamed of his weakness, he scrutinised the balance-sheet with a face as expressionless as a sphinx. Presently he folded the paper up and placed it in his breast pocket. Then, going into the inner office, he brought out a gold chronometer—one which had formerly belonged to one of his ships, and which watchmakers had pronounced irreparable—and requested the book-keeper's acceptance of it as a gift. He furthermore gave Mr. Dakins two distinct shakes of the hand, and, for the first time since the latter had been in his employ, now twenty-six years, he actually wished him a merry Christmas! It was too much for Dakins. The gift was unexpected and unprecedented. He strove in vain to articulate his gratitude, and had to content himself with sundry bows as he retreated from the room.

The substance of Mr. Krell's reflections after he was left alone might be summed up in a very few words. A millionaire at last! A millionaire at last! The delightful thought absorbed him for several minutes, then he arose, locked up the office, and went home.

Mr. Krell was a widower and had no children. He lived in a small house in the suburbs. His housekeeper, Mrs. Mathers, was waiting up for him. She stirred the fire and busied herself getting him something to eat. When the modest meal was prepared, Mr. Krell very quickly disposed of it, for his experiences had made him hungry. Then he rang the bell, and Mrs. Mathers reappearing, he asked her to remove the dishes, and to her astonishment, requested her to bring materials for a tumbler of hot toddy. The order being obeyed and the toddy mixed, the millionaire drew his chair up before the fire, the toddy at hand, seated himself and relapsed into thought.

"A million! A million at last! Well, long and steadily have I striven for it." Here he began to dangle the heavy bunch of old-fashioned keys he was holding, and, after a few moments thus employed, he mentally came to the conclusion that he had reason to be entirely satisfied with himself. Not that he was at all contented. On the contrary, he already began to plan larger schemes than ever; but up to the present he thought that he had done well, and he expressed his satisfaction and sealed his self-approval with a long sip of toddy.

As he was setting down his glass, the door opened, and a man of about the millionaire's own age entered, uninvited and unannounced. The stranger laid his hat and gloves on the sideboard, deliberately took a chair, placed it opposite Mr. Krell, and calmly seated himself, the millionaire looking on in speechless astonishment. Making himself perfectly at home, the newcomer took the poker and proceeded to stir the fire, after which he sat composedly back in his chair and turned to Mr. Krell with a slight nod of recognition. The latter continued to gaze with astonishment, but seemed unable to speak. Presently the stranger arose, went over to the millionaire and patted him on the shoulder.

"What's the matter, Krell?" he said. "Why don't you welcome me? I'm glad to see you, old fellow. Wish you a merry Christmas, and congratulate you on your good fortune."

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Without waiting for any reply the stranger laughed. Krell was still more astonished at the laugh, for he fancied it resembled his own; but as it was nearly thirty years since he was last guilty of laughing, he was not quite positive as to the resemblance.

The stranger's hands on Krell's shoulders gave him an unpleasant feeling; they had an unearthly chilliness about them. Yet he was unaccountably unable to resent the familiarity, although he struggled hard to do so.

"So you have made a million at last, Krell?" the stranger went on. "Allow me to again congratulate you;" and then he proffered his hand and Krell actually, but timidly, shook it.

"You must be a happy man this evening, Krell," he continued. "Don't you feel rich?" and as the stranger chuckled Krell's indignation increased. He always kept his business profits as secret as possible. Only two hours had elapsed since he was certain of being a millionaire, and he knew Dakins was no more likely to have let it out than he was to fly.

"How the dickens did you know I am worth a million; and who are you?" said Krell angrily.

"Oh, I am familiar with all your affairs, Krell, and yourself also, in the most natural way imaginable; but the nature of that way, and who I am, you must excuse me from telling you just at present. By-and-by you will know all about it." And the stranger laughed quite loudly.

Mr. Krell's usually haughty manner again tried to assert itself, but failed. As he was in the act of rising for the purpose of ejecting the stranger, the latter gently pressed him back in his chair.

"It's no use, Krell," said he, "to order me away. Your conduct at this festive season is quite inhospitable. You must be quiet and let us pass this Christmas Eve together in a social manner." The millionaire, impelled by some strange power, leant back and resigned himself to what might follow.

"So you have really made a million, Krell! What a successful man you are! How pleased you must be with yourself!—aren't you?"

"I suppose," replied Krell with a modest air, "I have no great reason to be dissatisfied with myself."

"Dissatisfied!" ejaculated the stranger, with a tone of surprise, "I should say not. You ought to congratulate yourself. Just think of it! Thirty years in business, commenced on nothing, now worth more than a million, acquired by your unaided exertions! Do you remember the day you first entered old Connell's office, on a salary of thirty pounds for the first year? You were a lad then. And how rich you felt when the first week was paid you! How many golden castles your imagination built out of that! And then your salary was increased yearly, and when it reached four hundred, in a moment of weakness you fell in love!" Here the stranger grinned and nudged Krell in the ribs; but the latter did not appear to see the joke, and looked very uncomfortable.

"What was her name, Krell? Janet Key, wasn't it?"

"Yes," he answered meekly.

"Yes, as I have already said," continued the stranger, "you showed then a phase of weakness, but nobly you overcame it.

"I had never any doubt of your success after the termination of that short struggle; for it was during this love episode you resolved to become rich, and this girl was poor. I admit, as some excuse, that she had what is called beauty and amiability and all that sort of thing. But none of these qualities have any appreciable value in 'prices current,' or on the Stock Exchange. Had you married her, you would have had to support her, and perhaps a family in addition, and these considerations induced you, with Spartan fortitude, to terminate the engagement, and to bear the taunts of her friends that you had broken her heart. Faugh! Broken hearts are frauds! Never saw one. Don't believe in them. Do you, Krell?"

"I assure you I do not," said the millionaire quickly.

"Of course not, Krell, of course not. You acted with perfect consistency; and consistency is not inaptly compared by one of those half-crazy poets, called Shakespeare, to a jewel, on account of its rarety."

"Indeed," said Krell, "I think I have heard of that name before."

"Well, Krell, having surmounted this weakness, you henceforward resolutely set to work for wealth, and you wisely determined that no other object should again impede its attainment. By degrees you became rigidly economical. As you got richer, the world said you became meaner; but I say you got wiser. Contributions to art, science, literature, and all such nonsense were gradually discontinued, and you sagely held that the daily perusal of the money article, the prices current, and the shipping list, was sufficient for any man. In your office you worked early and late; you were keenly sensitive as to how and where money was to be made, and you thus became invaluable to your employer, so that he felt himself obliged to take you into partnership. After that you worked still harder. You made money still faster. You were congratulated on the Exchange and in the street for your business sagacity. Men began to take off their hats to you; for, my friend Krell, piety may quote Scripture on the worthlessness of wealth, and the pulpit may preach that money is the root of all evil, yet they all worship the golden calf.

"Of course, Krell, there are exceptions, even as there are business men weak enough to treat money as of secondary importance, instead of being, as it is you know, the primary object of life. For instance, there is McLennan, a quondam schoolmate of yours—you both commenced business about the same time. But he belongs to this exceptional class. He actually married for love, early in life, and before he was worth two thousand. Neither he nor his wife ever refused themselves any so-called comfort; and as he increased his earnings so he increased his expenditure. Now there are few of these societies dubbed charitable, to which they do not fancy they are bound to contribute, and because a Lazarus now and then blarneys them with a blessing, and a Magdalene figuratively bathes their feet with her tears, I do believe they feel themselves compensated for the money they have thrown away on such worthless objects. It is perfectly shocking, isn't it, Krell?"

"Perfectly shocking!" echoed Krell.

"And what is the consequence of such thriftlessness?" continued the stranger. "Why, this man, with all his opportunities, isn't worth a million, as you are! Think of that, Krell, and take a warning by the example—not that I think, to your credit, *you* need any such warning.

"Even you married at last, Krell—but you married wisely. You got, you know, old Connell's only daughter. She was said to have been neither too amiable nor good-looking, and as the French say, of a certain age; but what sensible man regards ugliness if it be gilded with gold dust, or a bad temper offset by bonds and bank stock? She inherited all her mother's wealth, and you reckoned

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upon getting her father's also. This was your second grand *coup*, your judicious *affaire du cœur*.

"You perceive," said the stranger, grinning again, "I have some little knowledge of French, Mr. Krell."

"Yes," faintly answered Krell, who now assumed an appearance of entire resignation.

"We now," continued the stranger, "reach the period of old Connell's death. From that time you have become the sole manager of the business. Having now attained to large possessions by your own efforts, you naturally saw, more than ever, the folly of giving any of your money away, and accordingly you withdrew your subscriptions from the few charities which you had hitherto deemed politic to aid annually with a guinea. Your life and experience now led you to believe that none had any right to live who could not support themselves, and that misfortune was simply retributive justice and deserved neither help nor pity. Wise Malthusian views! Noble sentiments! Worthy of an old Roman, are these of yours, Krell!

"The next step in your successful career was the death of Mrs. Krell. I know your neighbours said you had no love for her, and that you were rather pleased than otherwise at her departure, as it gave you absolute possession of her property; but they should give you credit for your sincerity, for you certainly did not simulate any great sorrow, if you did not feel it—and I hate hypocrisy! Having neither wife nor children, you now wisely sold your dwelling and purchased a smaller and cheaper one. You curtailed your domestic expenses, reduced the number of your servants to one, resigned the church pew and rented a single sitting. Pious Mr. Krell!" (here the stranger actually winked). "In a word, you acted with your usual wisdom, and were on the road to becoming richer faster than ever.

"But I must now approach the second, and to your credit, the last weak spot in your untarnished career. I mean that affair connected with your sister's husband. Your only sister, or near relative, I believe? By-the-bye, is she living yet?"

"I really am ashamed—er—er—I mean to say," stammered Mr. Krell, "that I believe my clerk, Mr. Dakins, knows. I feel rather cold; shall I put on a little more coal?" he inquired, in a very meek tone.

"Quite unnecessary. Don't be extravagant; we shall be warm enough shortly," said the stranger, as he laughed immoderately.

"To return to that brother-in-law. You actually endorsed an accommodation note for him! You know you did, and don't attempt to deny it. And you lost fifteen thousand by it, and what excuse have you to offer?"

"The fact is—er—er—I made much more than that through him, and I endorsed in the belief that if I could thus keep him from bankruptcy for a few weeks, I should be able to secure some sugar cargoes which I knew were coming to him. But I never endorsed again for anybody, I assure you."

"I know that, Krell. Still, it is a pity you made this mistake. But I must do you the justice to say you gave the fellow no mercy when the collapse took place, and before you secured the sugar. I rather pitied you on that occasion; for you had not only to bear the loss of your money, but also the abuse of his friends because you tried to realise all you could from the estate, and for administering him a little deserved punishment in a debtor's prison. And when you released him, they had the ingratitude to say you did it upon a doctor's certificate that his mind and body were rapidly failing through his incarceration. Your conduct was characterised by consistency and entire impartiality; you nobly refused to allow his relationship to interfere with your uniform treatment of all your defaulting debtors. Therefore, I forgive your endorsation," and the stranger gave Mr. Krell another chill by patting him on the shoulder.

"You quickly recovered the amount of that loss. That was indeed a smart stroke—the foreclosure of Aikens' farm; the 'Homestead' as his family called it. The goose! He—old Aikens I mean—imagined when he gave that mortgage he would have no difficulty in paying the loan, and therefore he complied with your conditions. You knew better, Krell. Ha! ha! And what a jolly row his wife made when you ejected them! How she bawled and appealed to you for a little mercy, as she called it, for her poor, helpless children! Unreasonable woman! but all women are alike in that respect. You must have realised a handsome profit on that transaction."

"Yes," said Krell, "I did pretty well on that affair."

"And not only in that case," said the stranger, "henceforward everything you touched, Midas-like, turned into gold. And although some uncharitable people called you by hard names, and even children would be rude enough to run away, in seeming fear, at your approach, you were sustained by the becoming humility of your debtors who were slow in their payments; by the entreaties to you of joint stock promoters to subscribe and become a director, and by the rapid rise of the Squeeze-'em Bank stock as soon as you were elected the manager."

Suddenly Mr. Krell arose, and in agitation exclaimed: "Are not those bells tolling a death?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the stranger, "those are Christmas chimes! merry, merry Christmas chimes! Why, Krell, I fear you must be feeling unwell. You appear to be excited. Courage, Krell, be yourself and show no weakness. Allow me to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!" And here the stranger again shook Krell by the hand, the latter wincing slightly under the operation.

"I have not," said Krell, "been in the habit of regarding these seasons with any particular favour, as their observance entails a sad waste of time."

"I know that," said the other; "the custom is a superstitious relic of the dark ages. Day is given man to work only; we work to make money; *ergo*, to make money every day in the year should be the sole end of man! This truth aught to be incorporated into every church catechism."

"Very true indeed," said Krell. "I have always striven to act according to that excellent precept."

"I know you have," said the stranger, "and on that account I am having this genial chat with you; and you will be appropriately rewarded. Krell—you take my word for it. But we are digressing. Let us resume the thread of our discourse.

"A recent book-writer, I am told—for, like yourself, I never waste time in reading any book except an account book—has asserted genius to be synonymous with industry, and that an undeviating, life-long effort in the attainment of an object is the sign of true genius. This peculiarity, he says, creates Alexanders and Napoleons. If this be true, Krell, then you are a hero! You have this element of genius, and although some win their trophies in the battle-field—the broken lives (excuse the phrase, Krell) made by you in your counting-house are equally deserving fame. In fine, your course, on the

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whole, is a wiser one. And yet they say you are unhappy and heartless. Let me disprove the assertion; Krell, I will take out your heart and show it to you."

"Pray don't!" cried Krell, with a terrified countenance.

"Don't be afraid. The operation will be perfectly painless."

The stranger then placed his hand on Mr. Krell's left side, and, without any difficulty, and apparently without any sense of feeling on Krell's part, he removed a substance in shape and size resembling a heart, but apparently petrified. Touching the top with a finger, a lid suddenly opened, and from within he extracted bonds, mortgages, deeds of sale, promissory notes, bills of exchange, certificates of stock, in large numbers; and in bulk far beyond the seeming capacity of the article.

"Who says now," cried the stranger to Krell, "you have no heart? Here is a jolly one, though it is a little hard and dry; and full of riches, though it be lacking that sentimental and unprofitable stuff, figuratively called 'the milk of human kindness.'"

"Spare me! Do stop, for Heaven's sake!" cried Krell. "I feel so cold and sick. Leave me, and I will seek my sister and her family—I will befriend them—I will make restitution to all whom I have oppressed—I will aid the poor—I will resign all I have. Oh! heavens, who are these? There's Aikens again! I thought you were dead! Here, I'll give you back that farm—and there is Swandon! Don't say again I ruined you and broke your wife's heart. I'll give you back all I took. And there—is—is—Heaven have mercy on me!—have——"

"Too late, Mr. Krell," interposed the stranger, "too late, too late!"

* * * * *

The papers on Christmas morning contained the following paragraph: "We have to record the sudden death of Mr. Krell, a wealthy and successful merchant, a director of several joint stock companies, and the worthy manager of the Squeeze-'em Bank. About midnight, his housekeeper was awakened by the sound of a heavy fall in the dining-room, which was immediately succeeded by the howling of the house dog. On reaching the room she saw her employer's body stretched on the hearthrug, apparently lifeless. A physician was quickly called, and he pronounced Mr. Krell to be dead. An inquest will be held to-morrow. It is surmised that his death was occasioned by disease of the heart!"

JOHN POPHAM.

FORTUNES MADE OUT OF BOOKS.

EVERY year some book is published which takes the public by storm, and brings to its author, not only fame, but fortune almost beyond the dreams of avarice.

To mention only two books of this kind, "Trilby," and "The Christian" realised vast sums for their creators, and, for a time at least, a kind of mania seemed to have seized the reading public, who could talk of nothing else but these stories.

In the United States, during the past six months, a similar craze has been witnessed in connection with two wonderful books of a religious character. These volumes, "Quo Vadis," and "Titus," are stories of the time of Christ and the Apostles. The former is by a Polish writer, "Henryk Sienkieviecz," and has been translated into English, whilst the latter is by a lady, Mrs. Florence Kingsley.

Both authors were practically unheard of before, but in a moment, as it were, they have become famous by their latest works.

There is always a certain fascination in a story of the early Christians and the terrible sufferings they endured at the hands of the Cæsars. "Quo Vadis" and "Titus," for some inexplicable reason, are almost unknown in this country, but a powerful story of the Domitian Persecution, which will bring in as a prominent character the last of the apostles, St. John, is about to be published as a serial in *The Sunday Reader*.

The story is entitled "In Cæsar's Name," and has been specially written by a very clever and popular author. It will, without doubt, take a foremost place amongst works of its kind, and every reader of this journal should be sure and read "In Cæsar's Name."

The first chapters will be published in *The Sunday Reader* of January 29th. The story is splendidly and powerfully illustrated by an artist who makes a speciality of ancient scenes, and who has for a long time been reading up the history, manners, and dresses of the period. It is, without doubt, the most powerful story of the period of the Cæsars ever written.

A GREAT SCHEME.

HOW TO GET ANY BOOK YOU WANT.

WE are constantly receiving complaints from readers that we do not devise competitions in which everybody can enter.

It is difficult to do this—to give everybody an equal chance of success.

However, we think we have hit upon something this time.

Every week we shall give away half-a-dozen books.

All a competitor has to do is to send us one Book Coupon cut from *The Sunday Reader*, one from the *Athletic Record*, and one from *Short Stories*.

Send these to us in one envelope together with a request for any single book in the whole world of literature.

From the applications we receive we shall each week pick out six and send the books asked for.

If you are not successful one week, keep on trying, you are bound to be successful some week.

All applications to be addressed to "BOOKS," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please let me have: **S. S.**

Book.....

Price.....

Name.....

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THIS morning I received a letter from Ruth Clayton announcing her engagement to Charlie Everett. Dear me, I begin to feel like—I was going to say an old maid—but I will lessen the blow by using the term bachelor-girl; that certainly sounds more self-respecting and less resigned, for even at twenty-five there is room for hope, and then it is true that I don't look my age. Sometimes I feel that I am scarcely honest when I allow people to think that I am still in my teens, but if they will be so stupid why should I enlighten them?

When that dear boy, Tom, left, I told him his case was hopeless, that I could never be more than a friend to him. I did not even use the time-honoured sister ruse. I might have told him that I was his senior by three or four years and thus have put an end to his infatuation, but I couldn't bear to shatter his hopes in that particular way, and he has gone back to town cherishing in his heart a seventeen or eighteen year old ideal of me. I drove over to the station with him that last evening. These country places are very propitious for flirtations; he held my hand a moment in farewell and called me "little one." I really felt like a fraud, but what a blow it would have been to him to have announced, in cold blood, that I was twenty-five. His letters are tenderly regretful, and ring with hope notwithstanding my firmness. I have written once, but think I shall not do so again. If we meet in town this season, some of my friends—the Cooks or Blanchard girls—will doubtless tell him my exact age, or perhaps in the fulness of their hearts, add a year or two; so I will let him down easy now, and he will have less to blame me for when he does find out how he has been deceived.

Well, to return to Ruth and Charlie, they will doubtless be happy together; she is a sweet girl, one of those prettily dependent creatures, calculated to make a man proud of his own self reliance, and conscious of the importance of himself in particular and mankind in general. I always thought they would make a match of it some day. He is not brilliant, but true and manly, and, I presume, very much in love. I remember as long ago as last summer he preferred Ruth to me. We were all on the Clayton's yacht together, and he was by far the best-looking man aboard, so I thought him fair game, and tried all my wiles, but he was proof against them, and returned after each of my attacks to Ruth's side. At the time I was a little huffy, for I was obliged to turn my attention to one whom I thought a rather elderly man, of not very promising appearance.

I did not know William then as I do now. William Holbrooke then seemed old, his grave, quiet manner and iron-grey hair gave him an appearance of age which deceived me; he is really only ten years older than I am.

My face burns now when I recall the manner in which I received his kindly warning the day we anchored in Bleak Harbour. It was perilously rough, but I insisted upon going into port in our little boat. I came out of the cabin attired in my freshest and most becoming yachting costume, and as I stepped on deck, I saw a look of surprise come over the faces of the party who sat lazily watching the waves and speculating as to the results of the storm.

"Miss Knowlton, you surely will not venture out on this rough sea in that tiny boat. The clouds are growing more threatening every moment; it seems risky even for the sailors to go ashore. The wind is rising rapidly, and if we have a storm, we need your gay presence aboard ship to keep up our spirits," said Mr. Holbrooke.

"Poor grandpa," I replied, "if you are afraid, I am not; perhaps when I am your age I shall be nervous. But now I am off. Who will go with me to brave the stormy deep?"

Mr. Holbrooke's bronze face whitened for an instant, and I saw that my rudeness had hurt him, but prompted by my evil genius (I'm sure I have one), I answered his next entreaty to stay aboard in the same discourteous way.

"Katherine, listen to me," he said earnestly; "you are fool-hardy. Whatever motive prompts you to risk your life on this rough water is not worthy of you; if you care not for yourself, you should think of others; why cause them such unnecessary anxiety?"

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"By what right do you presume to undertake a surveillance of me?" I asked, drawing myself up haughtily, and flashing a look of defiance into his grave eyes. "If Mr. Clayton, our host, does not object, why should you?"

I knew so well Mr. Clayton's indifference!

"I beg your pardon, Miss Knowlton, for the interference I've been guilty of. You are right; of course, I have no right, but since you are determined to go, I shall accompany you, with your permission."

By this time the party on the deck were all agog at our heated discussion; and suddenly becoming conscious of the food for gossip we were furnishing, I repressed the cold declination that came to my lips, and bowed my acceptance of his offer.

I had friends staying at the White Shore Hotel, so there was no occasion for a chaperone, even if any of the married ladies could have been induced to risk their lives in the frail boat in which we were to breast the waves. Two of the sailors, brave fellows that they were, let down the boat, and, with a hasty kiss to Ruth and her mother, we were off.

As soon as we were well under way I said: "Mr. Holbrooke, why did you insist upon coming; I should not have minded the trip with our good sailors."

"I am very sorry if my presence is disagreeable; please forgive me, Miss Knowlton, but I could not let you without protection, and I seemed to be the most available."

I looked at William Holbrooke proudly, about to scorn his protection, but something in his firm, kind gaze, saved me from perpetrating any more ungracious remarks. An instant afterwards the boat gave a fearful lurch, I shut my eyes, but knew instinctively that we were capsizing, and in another moment I found myself submerged in the cold, terrible water. It is all too horrible to relate; it's like a nightmare to me now. The only thing I remember distinctly is the sense of security that came over me when I felt William's strong arm round me—what strength he had! Holding me with one arm, and clinging tenaciously to the overturned boat with the other, I heard him say: "Hold on to me tight, Katherine," but I seemed to be in a dream, the waves rolled over my face, and I made no effort, but sank into unconsciousness.

That evening I awoke in the White Shore Hotel. Dear Mrs. Graham was bending over my pillow, and there was a lovely bunch of my favourite Katherine Mermet roses on the table by my side. I put my hand to my head and reassured myself. What a blessing is naturally curly hair! I always feel myself at such an advantage, for, whether wet or wind-blown, I know my chestnut locks are falling into soft, becoming ringlets, and the peace of mind that knowledge gives me imparts a bright, care-free expression that is unknown to the slaves of the curling iron.

"How do you feel, dear girl?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"I think I am all right, except that I am painfully tired and sore; but tell me how I came here? Is it a miracle? The last thing I recall was making up my mind that I had done with all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; and isn't it strange, I don't remember regretting them at all?"

"The doctor said you were to be kept quiet, dear, but of course you won't rest until you know that all were saved. The lifeboat picked you all up and brought you into the hotel. We saw them capsize from the porch. I wonder that my hair is not white, and if I had known it was you, madcap, I am sure it would have been; as it was, I suffered terribly." So on, *ad finitum*, she continued, chiding me and caressing me over and over again, regardless of the doctor's injunctions, while I lay calm and happy in the assurance that William Holbrooke was saved. I had not dared to ask for him, so fearful was I that my mad foolishness had brought him to a watery grave

During the three long, dreary days that I lay in the little white room in the hotel, unable to continue my voyage on the yacht, I had ample time for reflection, and I devoted most of it, much against my will, to William Holbrooke. I could not keep him out of my mind, though he had not come near me or sent any word, and I was too proud to ask about him. I remembered all his gentle kindnesses to me, and recalled with a smile his grave, quaint humour. The strength and sweetness of his character burst upon me with new light, and I looked back upon my rude behaviour with painful regret. His silence showed me very plainly what he thought of me, and I found myself in a state of abjection, hitherto unknown.

I heard when I rejoined the yachting party (how good they all were to me, notwithstanding my late escapade) that Mr. Holbrooke found telegrams awaiting him at the hotel at Bleak Harbour, which called him back to London, immediately, and he subsequently sailed for the Cape. I thought it was unforgiving of him not to have left me a good-bye. However we took aboard a party of college boys at Margate, and I was very much occupied during the rest of the time.

This morning's post brought me news of Ruth's engagement, and in company with her letter was one from William Holbrooke. He has returned from abroad, and writes me he is coming down here to-night. He says that he has tried to forget me, as he felt the hopelessness of his love, for did I not take every means of showing him my indifference!

Ah, me! if I had only discovered the note to which he refers, in the Mermet roses! I might have known that only he would have remembered which flowers I loved best. But I never found the missive that he sent by those sweet messengers. I presume the chambermaid edified the servants' hall with the words that should have been sacred to me. No wonder he thought me cold and heartless, but he says he is determined to ask me face to face. When I answer Ruth's letter I shall, *D.V.*, have an engagement of my own to announce.

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MISS MERRYVIEW'S SLUMMING.

It was not a pleasant sight that met Miss Merryview's eyes as she climbed three flights of uncertain stairs, avoiding dirty, squalling children who were tumbling up and down, and trying to stifle the undeniable odour of beer and cabbage which floated out to her on every landing. Her rich furs and aristocratic person seemed sadly out of place, but with the determination born of ignorance she pressed on until she gained the fourth floor of the disreputable-looking tenement to which her mistaken motives but thoroughly good intentions had led her. The room before which she paused was little better than the rest. There were the same broken chairs and cracked window-panes, but the bed was made up smoothly, the floor was not littered with trash, and no decided odour met her delicate nostrils. She hesitated at the half-open door, knocked, but received no reply. A second knock brought no response, so she advanced timidly, looking about rather fearfully, but still preserving her determined air.

"This looks like a good place," she observed. "That is, a good bad place. I wonder if anybody is in? Oh, I don't like slumming a bit. I never would have come here if the girls didn't want me to come. Well, I won't come again, for I don't think it's a bit funny. The old woman downstairs was horribly rude when I offered to make her some tea—and I'm sure I've done it very beautifully every Thursday afternoon this winter. She wouldn't even take a flower. Oh, I wish somebody would come!"

Growing impatient, she rises and walks about the room, loosening the furs at her throat and displaying a rich diamond brooch. The touch of it startles her.

"Oh, I wonder if that's safe? Would anybody—I've heard awful tales——" She is hastily closing her cloak and almost preparing to go, when a sound makes her turn to face a girl who stands in the open door, looking at her questioningly. The fair intruder is not at ease, for the newcomer holds herself with a certain uncouth dignity, and her heavy features are full of strength. The two women are almost of an age, but the difference in their appearance is almost pitiful. One fair, exquisitely dressed, and with the happy, complacent face of those daughters of fortune who have never known what it is to want for anything; the other old before her time, with gaunt features which tell their tale of poverty, perhaps hunger; eyes which hint at tragedy, and rough garments which have done service for several seasons.

Miss Merryview advances with some embarrassment. "I—ah—good-morning. The door was open, and I knocked several times. Nobody answered—so I came in." This last rather lamely, but with that engaging smile which never fails to win a friend.

"Will you sit down?" the other girl asks gravely.

"Thank you;" and Miss Merryview seats herself in the doubtful looking chair nearest her.

"Did you want to see me?" inquires the girl. Then, noticing her visitor's hesitation, she continues: "Dad is not home, of course. Grandmother's drunk again, and the children are at the shop. So would I be, but I was discharged last week because I wouldn't kiss the foreman." All this was said in a dull, spiritless tone, utterly devoid of any emotion.

"What?" gasps Miss Merryview in horror.

"That's what I said," replies the girl doggedly. "They all call me a fool for it; but I won't have Tim O'Neill coming round me with his drunken eyes and dirty hands. I hate him"—her colour rising and her voice full of emotion now—"I hate them all." She begins to cough on account of her excitement.

Miss Merryview rises and speaks sympathetically. "My poor girl. Can't I help you in some way?"

The girl looks at her keenly. "So you *are* one of them missionaries after all? I thought at first you was a lady."

Miss Merryview makes a gesture of deprecation. She feels strangely ill at ease with this daughter of the tenements.

"I——" she begins.

"You needn't say anything to apologise," interrupts the girl. "I'm used to it," wearily. "They come down here every once in a while to have fun—'slumming' they call it. They come into our houses, uninvited. They ask impertinent questions. They say 'My poor girl, I want to help you;' some leave tracts and tell me to trust in God. What right have they to come here? What good do they do? The women only come once; the men come again—and they don't bring tracts."

Miss Merryview shudders.

"You had better stay at home," continues the girl recklessly. "Stay in your pretty gold cage like a beautiful bird. We are in a cage, too, a cage that is a trap—a rat-trap."

Miss Merryview at lasts takes the initiative. "I wish I could say something to you," she murmurs in her

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sweet, shy way. "I want to and yet I cannot somehow. Miss—miss——"

"Maggie," mutters the girl.

"Won't you take these flowers, Maggie?" unpinning some lilies-of-the-valley from her breast and handing them to the girl who is struggling to strangle another cough.

Maggie looks at her in surprise, and then takes the flowers, gazing at them thoughtfully. She lifts her head and looks at Miss Merryview in the face.

"You are not like the rest," she says slowly.

"I wish you would let me do something for you, Maggie. Can you sew? We need a seamstress at the house."

"I couldn't make such things as you wear, miss."

"Well, then, couldn't you——"

"No! don't say anything more. I must stay here. I'm needed to look after the house. Grandmother's not fit to do it. Then, the children and dad!"

"Your mother?"

Maggie rises abruptly and walks to the window. "Five years ago dad pushed her downstairs. He was drunk; it killed her."

Miss Merryview gives an exclamation of mingled horror and sympathy.

"Oh, you've come into a nice family," says the girl with a bitter little laugh. "I told you you'd better go home. What can you know of us and our suffering? We live in another world. No sun shines in our lives. The clouds hide it. I am no older than you Yet look at me. I've been to night school, and had books from the library. I wish I hadn't, they taught me too much. I wish I was like the rest, for then I wouldn't care. I could stand this life here at home though—I'm often hungry, but that doesn't matter; I'm in rags, but that doesn't matter; there's a great pain in my chest, but that doesn't matter—nothing would matter to me if he would only come back."

"He! Who?"

"Who? The man I love—the only man I ever did or could love. But he left me. He came from your people." She turns fiercely on Miss Merryview. "Yes, that is what you do for us. That is why we hate you and your people and your money."

Miss Merryview is trembling, but she walks straight to Maggie. "You must not get so excited, Maggie. It it is not good for you. Come," leading her to the table, "sit down." She puts her white hand on the girl's brown one, and speaks gently. "I hope you do not hate me."

The girl bursts into tears. Miss Merryview wipes them away with her dainty white handkerchief.

"No," she sobs; "you are so kind—I love you."

"And now, Maggie, tell me. Why does he not come back, this—this man?"

"Because he's going to be married. I read it in the paper this morning." She speaks sullenly again in a dull, unemotional voice.

"Who is he?"

"No, I'll not tell you. I'll be true to him even if he did leave me. I'll never betray him."

"But, Maggie——"

"I tell you I won't!"

Miss Merryview notices a newspaper on the table and picks it up. "Very well, then, I can see for myself."

Maggie, who has buried her face in her hands, hears the rustle of paper and springs up wildly.

"No! No! Let it alone. You shan't see it." She tries to snatch the paper from Miss Merryview.

"Why, you silly child! There are a dozen announcements. How could I tell? There is even my own marriage notice."

"Your own?"

"Yes, here, the fourth one," pointing it out to Maggie.

Maggie reads with blanched face and frightened eyes.

Before Miss Merryview observes her, a noise is heard from the outside, and she walks towards the door, while Maggie stares at the paper gasping: "*Her!*"

The noise outside increases. It is Mike O'Donnell, Maggie's father, climbing the stairs heavily. His voice comes in at the door before his burly person presents itself to view.

"Shure I'll have none of them in my house. They're a blatherin' pack of liars. The cursed aristocrats!" Here he enters, red and reeling with drink.

Miss Merryview runs towards Maggie, who pushes her behind with a protective gesture.

"Father!" calls the girl in her clear young voice. This displeases Mike immediately, for he knows that Maggie only calls him "father" when he is drunk enough to merit reproof.

"I tell ye, I'll have none of 'em. Shure and didn't they turn me away from me wurk, and then come sneakin' and pryin' round an honest man's house. An' you a harbourin' of 'em here. Ungrateful hussy! Git out, I say!"

In his drunken frenzy he has drawn a pistol and waves it threateningly.

Miss Merry view screams. Maggie advances tohim.

"Father!" she cries again warningly.

"I say I won't have it, and you can go too—a nice daughter ye are, a turnin' up yer nose at Tim O'Neill. Git out!"

He reels towards her, looking, however at Miss Merryview. Maggie steps in front of the latter with arms outstretched. In his excitement, having worked up to what he thinks a righteous indignation, the man waves his arms, muttering curses and brandishing the pistol. The pistol explodes and Maggie falls to the floor. He drops the weapon immediately, sobered by the sight. Miss Merryview kneels by the girl's side, speaking frantically.

"Maggie! Maggie! Are you hurt? Speak to me!"

She raises the girl's head on her arm. The man falls on his knees, blubbering. "Maggie! Maggie! Shure I didn't mane to hurt ye."

The girl opens her eyes and looks up at Miss Merryview.

"I don't feel hurt," she says faintly, "but everything seems so queer. I fancy I'm dying. I'm not sorry—it isn't hard—on account of him."

"Oh, Maggie, don't!" moans the distressed Miss Merryview. "Why don't you go for a doctor?" she cries to the stupefied man and the people who have gathered about the door. "Quick!"

"No," says Maggie weakly. "It's no use. My—my flowers!"

Miss Merryview hands them from the table, laying them on the girl's breast and in her hands. She bends over to catch the faint whisper.

"You were good to me and I love you; but go home; don't—don't do any more slumming!"

Her head sinks on Miss Merryview's arm, her limbs relax, a peace steals over her white face, and her breath goes out with a soft sigh: "It's for the best and I'm glad."

BEATRICE STURGIS.

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AN INDIAN RAID.

THERE are not many people in this country who can say that they have had a brush with Indians—with the noble red man we hear so much about. But then, there are very few who have been such a roving stone as I have.

In my youthful days, when I read with bated breath the stories of Fenimore Cooper and others, my soul yearned for Indian adventures and narrow escapes from the scalping knife. In my flights of fancy, I remember that I always escaped unharmed. But when I did have an experience of the actual thing, it fell short of what I had imagined; in other words, it wasn't so pleasant. I only had one experience, and I cannot honestly say that I am sorry that my acquaintance with the redskins was not more extensive. It occurred while I was assisting (as a soldier) in the construction of a telegraph line.

To get the telegraph poles for the line from Fort Johnson to the railway, or at least for the northern fifteen miles of it, we had to get over on Pine Mountain, ten miles from the fort. As the poles were cut they were slid down the mountain side and then drawn along the line by a span of mules or carried on men's shoulders. The work was hard enough for a gang of lumbermen, but it was made worse by the peril from Indians. While there was a peace treaty in force, no Indian who had a chance to pick off a soldier or settler felt bound to observe it. Therefore, when it became the turn of company G to send out a sergeant and six men to cut, distribute, and set up five miles of poles, the colonel at Fort Johnson warned us to be on the look-out for trouble, and to neglect no precaution for adding to our safety.

We went into camp at the head of a narrow valley, close up against the precipitous side of a hill, and were safe from attack except by the front. As it was fine midsummer weather, we made a foundation of rock, and then erected a hut of poles and brushwood, and in a day or two we were snug enough. For the first four days there was nothing to create alarm. One man was left in camp to act as sentinel and cook, and the other five were more or less scattered, as they cut and distributed the poles. The sergeant took charge of the mules and the hauling, and this work took him beyond our support much of the time. He was a veteran Indian fighter, however, brave as a lion, and had no fear.

On the morning of the fifth day, while he was returning with the mules after hauling a pole to a spot two miles away, a party of ten Indians suddenly confronted him. They were led by a sub-chief named Little Bear, who was a frequent visitor at the fort, and well known to all the soldiers. During the war, which had closed only a few months before, this sub-chief had shot and scalped a corporal near the fort; and after the treaty he had come swaggering into the post with the scalplock attached to his belt, an action which so provoked Sergeant Milton that he snatched the ghastly trophy away, and offered to go outside and fight Little Bear in any manner desired. When the Indian demanded his trophy it was refused, and he left the post vowing vengeance.

Since then they hadn't met until now, and the soldier had but to look into the eyes of the redskin to see the pleasure he felt at thus finding his enemy alone and seemingly helpless. As the meeting took place the sergeant backed up against a mass of rock, got his carbine and revolver ready for shooting, and was so cool and determined that the Indians were awed.

They were anxious to kill him, but had only just arrived in the neighbourhood, and did not know how many men he had behind him or how near some of them might be. For the first ten minutes they were determined on a row, yet the sergeant's quiet way acted as a bluff, and they finally drew off. Before going, however, Little Bear said to him:

"When my father and other chiefs signed the treaty of peace, I told them that I would be against it until I had killed you. There is no war, but I shall not go into the fort again until I can wear your scalp at my belt."

The sergeant replied that if his scalp were wanted it was a good time to take it, but the Indians had other plans in view and left him!

When the sergeant returned to camp he related the incident, and for the next three or four days one of us accompanied him on his trips, and signals were arranged by which we might quickly come together in case of need; but nothing was heard of the Indian.

One afternoon we were cutting poles nearly a mile from camp, leaving a man named Brisbane to act as cook. He had been instructed to fire his musket in case he saw Indians, and having heard nothing from him, we started for camp at about five o'clock with a feeling that all was well.

We reached camp to find the man missing. His musket had been left behind, and nothing about camp had been disturbed. For an hour we expected his return any moment, thinking he had wandered away, but when night came and passed we were sure that the Indians had had something to do with his disappearance.

They had. Instead of being watchful and vigilant, the man had carelessly wandered down into the larger valley in search of berries, with no weapons, and Little Bear's band had pounced upon him and carried him into the hills and at first decided to torture him. That idea was given up, however, that they might make him a messenger to capture the rest of us. Why, after Brisbane was captured, the redskins did not enter and destroy our camp was a puzzle, but as a matter of fact,

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they hastened away, and we heard nothing of them until about sunrise next morning.

We were about to set out in search of our missing man when he appeared at the mouth of the valley with an Indian beside him. He had been stripped of all clothing, and the blood of a hare had been daubed all over him until he seemed to have been wounded in a dozen places. The Indian with him could understand English very well, and Brisbane had doubtless been told just what to say. As our attention was attracted he called out:

"Sergeant Milton, the Indians captured me yesterday and I have a message for you. They say that if you will come out and surrender yourself they will permit the rest of us to return to the fort, but all must leave their guns behind. If you refuse to do this, they will attack the camp and wipe you all out. Little Bear has been joined by twenty more bucks, and you have no show."

"Jim!" called the sergeant, when he had recovered somewhat from his surprise, "are you talking dead square?"

"No!" was the reply. "The force is the same as yesterday with five on top, who joined last night. There are six of you, and you can stand them off for a week."

The Indian beside the captive pulled his arm and muttered threats, evidently suspicious of his words, which he could not fully understand, but Brisbane continued:

"Let 'em do with me as they will, but do you hold the camp. Their idea is to wipe us all out. You might shoot the brute beside me, but there are two others behind that bush over there who would do for me. You won't surrender. I am to tell Little Bear that and let him do his worst."

"But how can we save you, Jim?" shouted the sergeant.

"There is no way. Make ready for a row, and fight to the last. It serves me right for not being on the watch yesterday. Good-bye, boys, and do the best you can, and tell 'em at the fort how it was with me."

He turned and was soon hidden from view, and we at once began preparations for defence. As I said at the start, we could be approached only from the front, and all six of us felt ourselves a match for double the number of Indians we might look for.

For half-an-hour we heard nothing more from the redskins. Then, from a point down the valley hidden from our sight, came wails, and cries of pain, and distress, as though the soldier were being tortured. Our first thought was to rush out, but after listening more closely all declared that the tones were those of an Indian, and that the plan was to draw us into an ambush. When it was found useless, the cries ceased.

An hour later Brisbane appeared on the same spot as before, having the same Indian with him. At the bidding of his guard he shouted:

"Little Bear has been joined by twenty more warriors, and unless the sergeant surrenders himself all will be killed. You are to have an hour in which to make up your minds."

"Are you prevaricating, Jim?" asked the sergeant in reply, using a term which he knew the Indian would not understand.

"The biggest kind!" shouted the captive, "divide the number of a full company of soldiers by ten and you have the right figure. Don't be humbugged into a surrender."

"But what will become of you if we don't?"

"Makes no difference. Be prepared for a rush and give 'em blazes!"

The soldier spoke so fast that the Indian could not follow him, but suspecting something wrong, the Indian led him away.

We pitied Brisbane, but could do nothing for him. We had no thought of surrender and we were sure we could beat off any attack.

We lay waiting and ready until close upon noon, when Brisbane suddenly appeared at the mouth of the valley, and running towards our camp at the top of his speed. Behind him were the Indians, who had planned it that way, thinking we would hesititate to fire for fear of killing our comrade. That was just what happened, and but for a strange thing the band would have been upon us before a gun was fired.

Thirty or forty feet down the valley was a shaky spot in the ground. We had noticed it in walking over the spot, but apprehended no danger. As the Indians charged they came in a solid body, and on reaching the spot the earth suddenly gave way, and all went out of sight in an instant, while Brisbane fell forward, clung to the edge of the hollow for a moment, and then disappeared.

A crust of earth about thirty feet square had given way, and when we rushed out it was to look down into a hole thirty feet deep, and see the Indians at the bottom of it.

Two were badly hurt; Brisbane's neck was broken as he landed at the bottom. No body of Indians ever received a greater surprise, and all their thoughts of fighting were gone at once. We saw plainly enough that the roots of several trees growing on either side of the valley had stretched across and interlaced to hold up the earth over what had once been a natural hollow. It must have been years and years before the crust was thick enough to hold up a man, but it had finally become strong enough for that, though not for the weight of eleven men rushing upon it.

The Indians looked upon it as a trap set for their destruction by the great Manitou, and were frightened into helplessness for a time.

The only way for them to get out was to be hauled out. We got the ropes, and first drew up the body of our comrade. This we looked carefully over, and found that the poor fellow had not been gashed or tortured, as we all feared would be the case.

Next we made them send up their rifles, tomahawks, and knives, and their own dead and injured. One redskin had a leg broken and a bad scalp wound, and the other had a shoulder dislocated and an arm broken at the wrist. When all were out, the living were commanded to pick up their wounded and be off, and even the defiant sub-chief was so humbled and awe-stricken that he obeyed without a murmur.

The sergeant warned them that if ever seen again in the neighbourhood they would be shot on sight. Not even a knife was restored to them, and they bore off their wounded and appeared only too glad to escape.

The two dead Indians were dropped back into the pit, while the body of Brisbane was taken to the fort that evening for a soldier's burial.

It was expected that Little Bear would demand a terrible revenge for the defeat and humiliation, but, as a matter of fact, the working parties did not catch sight of another Indian that summer, nor was there ever a claim made for the arms we took from the band.

H. PETERS.

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Professor Whirlwind.

HE was a majestic, taciturn man, with a beardless, bloodless face, and a massive head, entirely bald except for a tuft of coal-black hair just above the nape of the neck. What his real name was I never knew, but, for reasons that will appear later, I always think of him as Professor Whirlwind.

Our acquaintance came about on board the ocean steamer *Teutonic*. For several days I had noticed this strange figure pacing up and down the deck, often casting swift glances seaward and muttering to himself.

One morning, as I lay in my steamer chair watching this curious proceeding, I was astonished to see the Professor stop short, his head thrust forward and inclined to one side as if listening intently, while his gaze was riveted on a funnel-shaped cloud that had suddenly loomed up in the horizon.

For a moment he stood like this, as rigid as a statue, his eyes, ordinarily dull and filmy, flashing forth a lurid light. The next instant he threw up his hands convulsively, as if to shut out some dreadful vision, and tottered backwards like a drunken man. Fearing an accident, I sprang to aid him. But by an effort he recovered himself, and, wheeling about, walked hastily away.

As he turned, something fell from his person and rolled swiftly across the deck. Another moment, and the object would have disappeared into the sea, had I not caught it up out of harm's way. It was an oval case of gold, whose spring, broken by the jar, had started open, disclosing the miniature portrait of what seemed, to my momentary glimpse, a very young girl, with the delicate beauty of a flower. Closing the case, with the feeling that I had involuntarily intruded upon another's private affairs, I hurried after the portrait's owner. I found him in his stateroom, his eyes carefully scanning the floor, apparently searching for the miniature case, which I now produced. As he grasped it, with a sigh of relief, the spring once more started open, and, though this time I looked away, I felt that the Professor divined that its contents were known to me. At any rate, after a moment's hesitation, he began:

"Very likely you were amazed at my actions on deck and think me a coward, if not a maniac. And then this picture—you must have wondered what relation could exist between that beautiful young girl and one like myself. But since you have seen—well, do you care to hear a story, a true story, though one that staggers human belief?"

"Certainly," I said, "if you are sure that you care to confide in a stranger."

I had observed that while I was speaking, his eyes, instead of looking into mine, were fixed upon my mouth. It was not, however, till he touched his ear significantly that I knew he was deaf and could understand my speech only by watching my lips.

"Well," he continued, "I had two companions in my strange adventure; you have seen a portrait of one; let me show you a photograph of the other."

Rummaging in his trunk, he drew forth a photograph, cabinet size, of a very queer-looking biped, which, on a close inspection, I saw was a rooster. The curious thing about it, however, was that the fowl had been photographed in what an artist's model, perhaps, would term "the altogether," there was not a feather on it. And yet it seemed alive, and stood with its neck stretched forward, its bare wings partly raised, and its bill open, as if in the act of crowing lustily.

I laughed heartily.

"You would not have been so merry," the Professor said gravely, "if you had met him when I did. He was not then the swashbuckler that he appears in this photograph, which was taken a short while after the eventful day on which I fell in with him—the seventeenth of June of the year eighteen hundred and eighty-two.

"At that time I was living in the States, and was deeply in love with the most beautiful girl that I have ever known, the original of the portrait that you found. Oh, you need not smile, for I was then a good-looking, athletic fellow of but twenty-five years. Well, for some reason my love-making didn't progress. Alice seemed to care for me, but her parents, though they showed no opposition, somehow always made it impossible for me to see her alone. It was as though they suspected my purpose and were determined that I should have no chance to speak to Alice of my real feelings.

"But I was as determined as they. So, when the professional aeronaut, Lugui—you remember the *furore* he created—came to town with his monster balloon, a scheme came into my head that I thought would enable me to be alone with Alice.

"Lugui had found it profitable to let the public take short rides in the air, the balloon being attached for this purpose by a rope, several hundred feet long, to a windlass on the ground, worked by two strong men, who would allow the rope to unwind, and the daring passengers slowly to ascend.

"Now, my plan was simply to induce Alice to slip away and take a ride in the great air-ship with me, providing against the presence of other passengers by paying for the entire five seats."

"And the scheme succeeded?" I asked, as the Professor paused.

"Yes," he said gravely, "up to the moment when we began our ascent. But, just as the aeronaut's assistants had obeyed his signal, the balloon began to pitch like a ship in a storm, wrenched the handle of the windlass from the grasp of the men, and then—the earth bounded away in a succession of rapid leaps, like a jack-rabbit, and, before we could realise that the rope had snapped asunder like thread, we were so far from land that the shouting of the excited multitude sounded to us like the slumbrous drone of insects.

"'Well,' I exclaimed, secretly glad that the parting of the rope had prolonged our companionship, 'this may prove a longer journey than we bargained for. Shall I pull the valve-line and descend? Not frightened, are you?'

"'No,' she answered, laughing; 'a little higher. This is glorious!'

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"As for me, to be alone with her in the quiet regions was Heaven itself. Scarcely feeling the motion of our ship, up we glided through the blue silence, till the earth, covered with transparent mist like a veil of golden silk, began to assume a concave appearance; and, at last, our balloon, glowing like a golden planet, seemed to hang at the centre of the visible universe. Below us lay the earth—another sky—its horizon looming up to meet the upper bowl of the heavens. Around us slept an ocean of blue, its serenity unbroken save towards the west, where masses of clouds softened the fierceness of the sun, and threw a mellow radiance over all. Poised in mid-air, our balloon motionless, except for a dreamy swaying to and fro, the deep silence unbroken save by the soft Æolian murmurs of the wind in the rigging, we dwelt in a world all our own. Hand clasped in hand, we gave ourselves up to blissful dreams.

"Suddenly there was a rush of warm air from below that sent our balloon careering through space. Dense mists gathered over the earth, and a shrill wind, tearing the mists into long streamers, drove them northward, where they banked themselves in a towering mass of gloom against the sky.

"Alice, overcome with terror, begged me to descend, but the valve-cord had become entangled with other parts of the rigging, and resisted all my efforts to let out the gas, which now swelled the balloon until it threatened to burst.

"I had read enough of the history of aeronautics to know that the explosion of a balloon in the upper air is not very dangerous, and tried to calm my dear girl's fears by explaining that in such cases the resistance of the atmosphere soon throws the envelope of the balloon into the form of a parachute, that breaks the force of the fall.

"But I was not given much time for theorising. It had now grown so dark that we could scarcely see each other. As we cowered in the car, uncertain of what a second might bring forth, a ball of fire whizzed through the sooty darkness, illumining two peculiarly angry clouds that had made their appearance, one in the north-west, and the other directly opposite in the south-west. Swaying and swelling for a moment, as if moved by the impulses of living beings, they rushed madly together and formed a single, olive-green, funnel shaped cloud, that glowed in its upper part with a weird light, and began to whirl and hum like some gigantic top. It was a tornado spout!

"At the same time the air round us was filled with so stifling a smell of sulphur that Alice fell fainting into my arms. Our quivering balloon again bounded upwards, and then there was a report like a distant pistol shot. I knew that the balloon had exploded, and braced my nerves for the terrible descent. Kneeling, I supported Alice with my left arm, and with my disengaged hand got a vice-like grip on the rim of the car. As we began to fall, the car swaying frightfully from side to side, I heard a hoarse, rumbling sound like that preceding an earthquake, and glanced westward. The tornado funnel, humming and whirling round and round, like a mill-wheel, casting an unearthly radiance far above it, zigzagging at times from side to side, and lashing its tail like some maddened leviathan, was rushing straight towards us! What occurred the next instant I heard rather than saw. A whirr as of mighty wings, a rattle, as of musketry, a bellowing as of mad bulls, and we dropped like a stone into the abyss.

"I hardly expect to convey any conception of my sensations. For the first second there was the sickening feeling that one has when dreaming of falling from a high cliff. But, instead of the awakening bump, I felt a galvanic-like shock, my hair and beard standing erect, a pricking as of needles over my face and neck, a painful light shooting through my eyeballs, and my whole body alternately tossing and stiffening, as if from strychnia poisoning.

"The next moment I was plunged into a delicious bath of cool vapour, the rapidity of the descent gradually lessening, until at last the sense of falling ceased altogether, and the car began spinning in a jerky, pulsatory manner, but with incredible rapidity, round and round, as it appeared to me, in horizontal circles.

"All round me was a pitchy darkness, and from out that darkness came two sounds that Heaven grant I may never hear again. One, a commingled roar and wail that seemed to burst upward from the bowels of the earth: the other a continuous cutting, high-pitched, humming sound for which earth affords no comparison, unless it were the noise that would be made by the simultaneous buzzing of innumerable circular saws. This humming, never ceasing for a moment, and cutting through the fearful darkness, was inexpressibly horrible. Pitched high above the roar and wail that came from below, it jarred my very bones.

"To add to the horror of it all, Alice had slipped to the floor of the car, and my hands, feeling for her in the darkness, encountered a face cold as marble. As I strained my eyes to see her, a tiny shaft of light filtered down through the gloom, above and fell upon her upturned face. It looked white as snow in the sickly ray. But her eyes were only partially closed, and for a moment my heart throbbed with joy as I fancied I could detect a tremulous movement of the blue-veined lids. Then the light went out like a snuffed candle, and left us again in the whirling, humming darkness. But only for an instant. Again it shone downward, and soon a dull, spectral glow lit up the glow around us.

"What I now try to describe to you, I saw, of course, after my senses had somewhat recovered from their utter bewilderment. I found our car, on the rim of which the hoop had fallen with the wreck of rigging and silk still hanging to it, whirling, without visible means of support or propulsion, in the interior of an immense hollow, funnel-shaped cloud, that was spinning round and round with such bewildering rapidity that I should not have known that it moved at all save for the fact that it revolved, not in a regular, continuous manner, like a top, but in a pulsatory, intermittent way, like the ratchet-wheel of a clock (except that the revolutions were from right to

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left), and caught up at intervals visible spirals of vapour that swirled from the central axis of the funnel and sometimes dashed over us in a fine spray.

"The upper portion of the funnel was filled almost to the central axis with a luminous mist which was apparently in a state of rapid vibration, and through which could be dimly seen, floating on its upper surface, a phosphorescent disc of light, about the size of a dinner plate, from which there radiated towards the outer wall of the funnel concentric rings of light that were continually shifting and wavering in their hues.

"Brain-sick as I was, from the incredible speed, and appalled by the deafening noises, I still had some confused idea that we were in a tornado cloud. But what supported us? The envelope of the balloon had long since been shredded by the fury of the blast.

"Glancing downward, I saw indistinctly numerous objects in the embrace of the whirl.

"Once what looked like a large iron bridge was sucked up into the cloud for a short distance and, after floating for a few seconds, fell and disappeared. I believe I caught a glimpse of the earth as the lower part of the funnel ceased for a moment its furious lashings to and fro, and became partly cleared of the innumerable objects that were rushing pell-mell into its mouth.

"Suddenly the truth flashed upon me! It was the air itself that supported us! We were in the interior of an immense revolving flue, into which, as it travelled forward, powerful ascensional currents of air were indrawn at the earth below, and it was these upward, spiral streams, howling and shrieking as they were sucked into the vortex, by which we were carried round and round like a leaf in a small dust storm. But, oh, with what fearful velocity! Looking back on that vertiginous flight, I can but smile at the calculations of meteorologists that in the most violent tornadoes the centripetal whirl of the wind has a velocity of eight hundred miles an hour!

"I now began to feel a singular buoyancy of spirits. I rapidly recalled miraculous escapes of persons struck by tornadoes, and recollected especially having read that in the New Brunswick tornado of 1835, a lad had been carried upward and onward for a distance of a quarter of a mile, and afterwards deposited in safety. I remembered, too, that the spout which passed over Mount Carmel in 1877, and of which I myself had been an unwilling spectator, had carried bodily the spire of the Methodist Church a distance of over fifteen miles. I was even seized by a transport of joy at the thought that I alone, of all men, had been permitted to ride on the very wings of the wind.

"But how soon that elation collapsed! Suddenly something whirling near us became entangled in the mass of cordage and silk hanging to the hoop. I got the thing, and pulled it into the car. It was a rooster, entirely denuded of feathers, but still gasping with some sort of life. In spite of all, I could not help smiling at this unexpected visitor from the farmyard, and the picture of fear he presented as, with mouth agape, eyes protruding, and plumage gone, he lay quite still on the floor, occasionally sticking his head under his wing to shut out the horrid sights and sounds.

"A deathly chill crept over me. No mere wind, however violent, could divest a fowl of its feathers without killing it outright. But one agent in all nature could do it. I suddenly remembered my own sensations during the first sweep of my descent, and clapped my hands to my face and head: both were as free of hair as a newborn baby's. 'This rooster,' I then thought, 'has evidently been carried to the top of the funnel into that electric sea, which has stripped him of his plumage as it has me of my hair and beard. He had fallen again into the path of the tornado, and has been sucked up the second time into the vortex by the indrawn currents. *Is it possible for the same thing to happen to us?*'

"I now began rapidly to reflect upon what I had merely noticed before, that some of the objects that were sucked up would whirl past us and very suddenly shoot outwards through the walls of the funnel, while other and heavier objects would continue to circle below or sometimes fall back to earth. Plainly there was an altitude in the funnel where the ascending air-streams tended so strongly outwards from the centre that the objects light enough to reach that altitude were hurled through the walls.

"We might ourselves reach that altitude, for the violence of the whirl was increasing, the humming noise growing shriller and shriller, till it was elevated to the highest pitch of screaming. Suddenly something seemed to burst in my head, and all was silent. I looked up. The humming disc, the swirling spirals of vapour had not vanished, nor did it seem possible that such motion could exist apart from sound. There could be only one explanation. I had become wholly deaf!

"To add to the horror of the moment, I now discovered that our car was ascending. Instead of travelling horizontally in our circuits, it would shoot spirally upwards for a few feet, where it would make the circuit of the tunnel till another stronger current from below would whirl it up a few feet further. Another moment and the funnel was lit up with an intense light. Again I glanced upwards. The disc that had hung at the top of the funnel was sinking towards us, and we were slowly rising to meet it.

"Like a bird before a basilisk, I gazed at the fiery disc. Nearer and nearer it came, larger and larger it grew. Swimming about in the mist, now fiercely luminous and shooting from side to side of the funnel, now of a dull and dying red, and slowly rotating on its axis, but ever sinking, sinking.

"Stone-deaf as I was, I could hear it splutter and hiss like red-hot iron plunged into water. I know not what power of action at length possessed me. I rose to my feet. I caught Alice up into my arms. Rather than pass through that hell of fire I determined——"

Here the story was abruptly broken off. As his narrative neared its crisis, the Professor had been labouring under intense excitement, and at this stage of the narrative he suddenly stopped, and there was a repetition of his singular actions on deck. His visage assuming an expression of the most abject terror, and his eyes dilating like the eyes of a cat in the dark, he thrust forward his head and inclined it as if in the act of listening. Remaining fixed in this posture for a few moments, there flashed forth from his eyes a fire so vivid that the very atmosphere in front of him appeared to be thrown into a tremulous luminosity. Then, trembling like a man about to have an attack of epilepsy, he threw up his hands with a convulsive motion and fell to the floor in a swoon.

I hastily summoned assistance. The ship's doctor took him in charge. His malady must have been a serious one, for he was confined to his state-room the rest of the voyage. Though I made repeated efforts to visit him, the doctor's orders were peremptory that no one should see him. When we reached port the Professor was still ill. I have neither seen nor heard of him since.

Allen Quinan.

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BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CAPTAIN PETERS AS ANANIAS.

CAPTAIN HIRAM PETERS, as the reader will already have guessed, was the sort of man who, when he has taken anything in hand, puts it through at all personal and other hazards and in the shortest possible space of time. He was fully impressed with the absolute necessity of getting on board the *Minnehaha* and running her out of the Bay of Santo Domingo with as little delay as might be. He thought of his three hundred thousand dollars and the time when he would be not only captain but owner of the beautiful craft, and he made up his mind that before she fell a prey to anyone else he would either fight her guns while he had a man or a cartridge left, or drive her engines till the boilers blew up and, as he put it to himself, whooped her into glory with all hands.

The consequence was that, shocking horseman as he was, he not only managed to keep his seat in the saddle, but he covered the fifty odd miles to Santo Domingo in a little over twelve hours, and arrived in the city soon after sunrise the next day, stiff and sore, hungry and sleepy, with an exhausted vocabulary, and in the vilest of tempers, but still solidly resolved not only to get the *Minnehaha* out of the bay, but to make the treacherous little President help him to do it.

As he had humped and rolled and jolted over the weary miles, a plan had somehow shaken itself together in his mind which was at once daring and characteristic. Instead of attempting to go surreptitiously on board the yacht, he rode into the city with all the dignity that his aching bones would let him assume, dismounted thankfully in the courtyard of the Grand Hotel Central in the Plaza Mayor, drank three cups of coffee well dashed with brandy, ordered a room, and went and laid down for an hour or so for a much-needed rest and a quiet think. His companion he sent down to the jetty at the Bastion San Gil with orders to get a boat, if the *Minnehaha's* were not there, and go on board and tell the Chief Officer to have a full head of steam by ten o'clock. Soon after eight he himself got up, had a wash and a couple of cocktails, and went to the palace. The President was up taking his coffee with Madame Sybil on the veranda overlooking the patio.

As no one knew anything of the two messengers having been sent up to Lorrain, Don Gregorio was not a little surprised when the Captain's note requesting an immediate interview was brought to him. There could be no great harm come, as he thought, by granting the request and satisfying his own curiosity, so he gave orders for Captain Peters to be shown in at once, and as he came along the veranda he rose to meet him and shook hands with the greatest affability, and Madame Sybil graciously did the same.

"Well, Señor Capitan, this is indeed a surprise," said Don Gregorio, when the morning greeting had passed. "We thought you were far away up the Ozama, treasure-seeking with Don Francisco. May I ask what brings you back so suddenly to San Domingo?"

"I guess no one has a better right to, your Excellence," he replied, speaking very seriously, "seeing how very much it's got to do with you."

"Ah, what is that!" said Don Gregorio a trifle anxiously. "With me? How can that be, Señor Capitan? May I ask if my excellent friend, Don Francisco, has also come back, or is coming?"

"Well, Excellence, it is just about that that I came to see you. I've brought you a message from the Seenyor. He didn't have any pen and ink with him. It got forgotten, so he wants you to kindly excuse a letter. No, he is not coming back, and what's more, he isn't going to. He's found the treasure all right——"

"Ah! What, already?" Don Gregorio interrupted, with a start of surprise. "His good fortune has been our wonder! How did he do it so quickly?"

"Waal," replied the Captain quietly, and looking steadily at him while he spoke. "As far as I could see the Seenyor and her ladyship just walked straight along the stream till they came to a certain place, the seenyor looked at the map he'd got, took a good stare round at the scenery, found three biggish palm trees standing in a sort of triangle, two on one side of the stream and one on the other. Then he got a long bit of line and ran it round these trees, and started the chaps digging in the middle of the space. Pretty soon they found a thick old rusty chain leading to the stream, then he had a bit of a trench dug round to take the water off the bed, and then plumb under the bed of the stream they came on old Don Christoval's treasure-chest."

"Ah!" interrupted Don Gregorio again, with flushed face and eyes a-glitter. "Ah, how great was his fortune! And was there anything in it, Señor Capitan?"

"Waal, I should smile, Excellence. It was a mighty big chest; old hard oak, covered with lead and bound with iron, and when we got the lid clear and ripped it off, it was

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full chock-a-block with good old Spanish doubloons, fresh as if they'd been coined yesterday, and there were gold chains and rings and bracelets, and crosses and other religious fixings set with diamonds and rubies and emeralds. Great snakes, I tell you I never saw nothing like them! And then there was another box—a little one—inside it, and when we got that out and opened it it was just full of jewels and precious stones. No gold, mind you, there wasn't room for that, but just stones, regular big shining beauties, and I reckon three or four hundred thousand dollars wouldn't be far off the price of that one box?"

He paused for a moment or two to watch the effect of his words, and saw that it was all he had meant it to be. He could see that the madness of the gold lust was in their blood, flushing in their cheeks, and shining in their eyes. Don Gregorio's short breath was coming shorter and quicker than ever, and the lace of the mantilla which Madame Sybil had thrown round her shoulders showed that her breast was rising and falling more quickly than usual beneath it.

"Pray, go on, Captain Peters," she said very graciously. "I, for one, am dying to hear the rest. Tell us now what Don Francisco is doing with this wonderful treasure."

"That is just what I was coming to, ma'am," said the skipper, with a most provoking slowness. "Just as we were getting it out and doing it up in the packs, up comes one of our fellows from the yacht on horseback, galloping for his life to tell the Seenyor about this new craft that has come in here. She belongs to a couple of, well, I won't just call them pirates, though they ain't much better, who have also got on to this treasure of old Seenyor Christoval's. It was a bit of a race out here, in fact, and the *Minnehaha* got in first. The Seenyor knows their plans to a hair, and that's why he is not coming back. They are going up after him with a lot of their men, and if they were to meet him coming down with the treasure, there would be considerable shooting, which, as the Seenyor's got a lady with him, he isn't having any of just now; so he sent me down here to take the *Minnehaha* out and round to a certain point on the coast which I am not at liberty to mention just now while there might be anyone listening, and there he'll meet me with the treasure and ship it before they get a chance to put their thieving-irons on to it."

Captain Peters paused again here and took a sip at the coffee that had been brought him, and while he was doing so he saw the President and Madame Sybil exchange a swift and stealthy glance. Then he went on again:

"Seems also that there is another serious bit in the business which makes it pretty inconvenient for the Seenyor to come back to the city just now. There is a young lady on board who is the sister of his late lamented lordship, Sir Langton, and also aunt to that youngster who had the accident out at sea the other morning——"

"Ah! What is that you say?" exclaimed Madame Sybil, leaning over the table towards him. "What is that? An accident? Tell me of it."

"Certainly, ma'am," replied the skipper, who had no idea of the deep interest that she had in asking. "It was this way. The poor little fellow was playing about the deck and climbing about the rail aft when her ladyship wasn't looking, and a bit of a sea hit her on the other quarter, and being a very lively craft she gave a jump and when we looked the lad was gone. We stopped, of course, and lowered a boat and did what we could to find him, but it wasn't no sort of use, for we never saw him again. He must have gone right down. It maybe a shark helped him, poor little beggar. We were pretty sorry I can tell you, for he was as nice a little lad as ever you saw, and we were all getting to like him.

"But that," he went on in his ignorance of Madame Sybil's thoughts, "although it was an accident, doesn't go very well with the other one that happened to his lordship. I guess you will see what I am driving at there, your Excellence, and the plain American of it is that if the Seenyor was to come down here, or the *Minnehaha* was to stop much longer in the bay, Mr. Tristam and his friend would be going to the British Consul, and sending cablegrams to Kingston and Barbadoes and St. Thomas, and making things generally unpleasant for everyone concerned, and you just bet it would be unpleasant for everyone if they got up an inquiry here with two or three British warships cruising round the mouth of the harbour ready to land a squad of marines and blue-jackets just to see fair play. What do you think, your Excellence?"

It was a home thrust for Don Gregorio, and it didn't make Madame Sybil herself feel particularly comfortable. Neither of them knew just how much Captain Hiram Peters knew, and certainly no one could have spoken with a more perfect assumption of knowledge than he did. Moreover, neither of them had any notion how much Tristam and his friends knew, or just what their intentions might be. They were both haunted by the paralysing consciousness of blood guiltiness, and Don Gregorio more especially knew that anything in the shape of an inquiry conducted on the lines of cold-blooded, impartial Anglo-Saxon common sense, might be an exceedingly disastrous thing for himself; while as for Madame Sybil, she was already so utterly disgusted and sick at heart with her present lot in life that any promise of change would have been welcome to her, for in her soul she loathed and hated the greasy little scoundrel on whose protection she had been driven to cast herself. Hence Captain Peters' next words fell on ears more than ready to welcome them.

"And that being so," he went on after another of his judicious pauses of observation, "it seemed to the Seenyor that it wouldn't be quite a bad thing for your Excellence and her ladyship here just to come aboard the *Minnehaha* and take a run out to sea with us. You see, it's this way. If your Excellence comes along and we hoist the Dominican flag, as we did before, they daren't shoot. It 'd be more than the commission of any British or American officer would be worth to do it, so we shall get clear out. Then your Excellence can meet the Seenyor and take over your share of the treasure.

"A trip to Europe or up the States wouldn't be a bad thing when you get it. You see it'd pan out at a couple of hundred thousand dollars at least from what I've seen of it, and that is not bad spending money, to say nothing of getting out of a bit of a tight place. But of course that's for you to decide. I've got the Seenyor's orders to take the *Minnehaha* out of here, and I've got his orders to ask the favour and honour of your Excellence's company and her ladyship's on board, and I think that's about all. I have said what I was told to say and it's for you to say what you'll do, but anyhow the *Minnehaha's* going out at ten o'clock this morning, peaceable, I hope, but she's going."

There was a considerable silence after Captain Peters had delivered himself of this ultimatum. He lit another cigarette from the stump of his old one, paying a good deal of apparent attention to the process, and waiting with the air of a man who has done all he is going to do. Don Gregorio and Madame Sybil were each busily pursuing the especial line of thought which the circumstances laid down for each respectively, and in the end these two lines converged to the same point of conviction.

To Madame Sybil the idea of getting away from this dull, hot, evil-smelling old Spanish town, back into the great European world which had now been lost to her for so long was irresistible, and she was prepared to run any reasonable sort of risk to get there even for a few weeks or months. To Don Gregorio the prospect was no less inviting, and in his case, too, there were other considerations. If Lorrain had got the treasure and was taking it down to some other point on the coast, his idea of allowing the two search parties to meet and shoot each other to death fell to the ground. If Tristam went up to the Ozama, he would go to find nothing. Why not let him go? After

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all, he was a stranger, while Lorrain was an old acquaintance, bound to him at least by the ties of common crime.

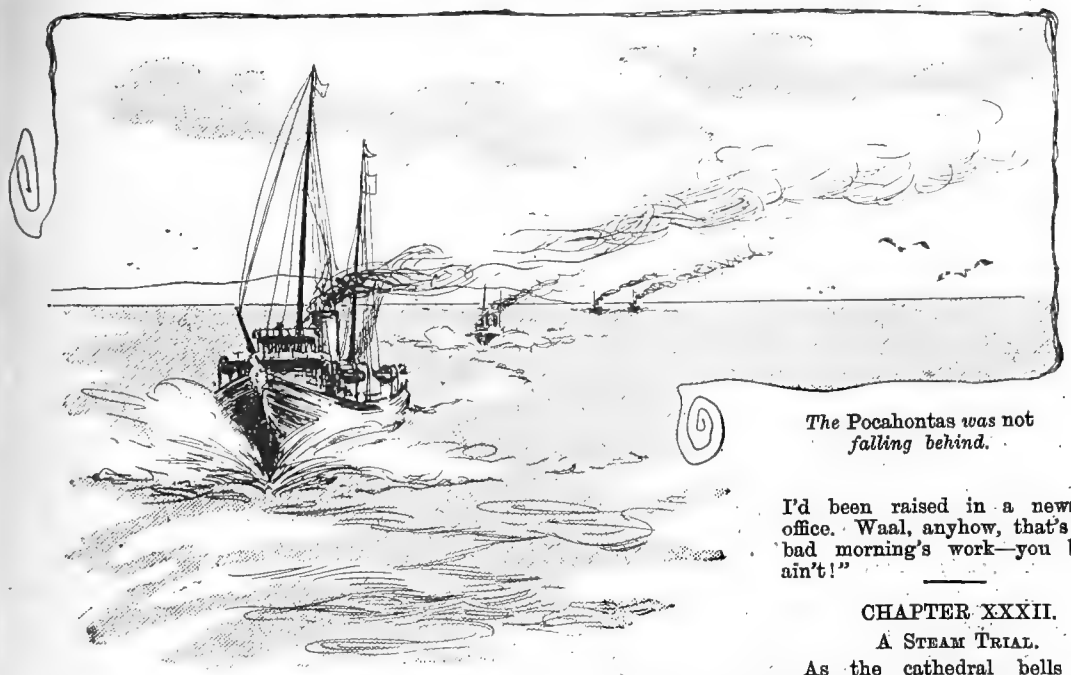
Of the two it was certainly better to trust Lorrain, to say nothing of the awkwardness that might result from an inquiry by the British Consul and the captains of the men-of-war into the mysterious disappearance of the man whom he had forced to die by his own hands in the cell under the citadel. Altogether the chance of an easy get-out looked very pleasant indeed to both of them, especially when viewed in conjunction with the near prospect of a substantial share in the treasure and all the immediate advantages that it would buy.

"Señor Capitan," said Don Gregorio at length, "for myself I thank Don Francisco for sending me this friendly invitation, and you for bringing it. I always knew that he would give his old friend a part in his good fortune when he found it. For my myself I say yes, we will take a little trip with you. The city is not healthy at this time of year.

"And the *Minnehaha's* propellers, ma'am, shall begin to go round between that and five minutes past, and I guess we'll have a real pleasant trip. And now," he continued, rising from the chair, "I'll just go on board and get everything fixed up. I presume, Excellence, that we shall go out under the Dominican flag?"

"Assuredly," said the President, as they shook hands; "assuredly, that will be safer. They will not dare to violate the flag. Under that we shall be safe."

"Safe!" chuckled the skipper, when he got outside the palace. "Ye-es, you'll be mighty safe when I get you on board the yacht, you yaller-skinned, half-baked son of a heathen greaser! You bet you'll be safe! Hiram Peters, you're a darned good steam-boater and not any particular slouch in a fight, but, by the ghost of Ananias I believe you're a better liar on the spot than either! I wonder what the Seenyor'd have thought of me if he'd just have been sitting there list'ning to me slinging off those lies just as if



The Pocahontas *was* not *falling behind.*

I'd been raised in a newspaper office. Waal, anyhow, that's not a bad morning's work—you bet it ain't!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

A Steam Trial.

The rebellion is broken and that thief Manuelo is dead. I shall say that I am going to Europe to raise a big loan for the treasury, and that I shall bring it back in that wonderful ship of yours. Garcia, the Vice-President, belongs to me, and he will keep things in order till I come. Besides, they will not forget those guns soon. What think you, querida, will you come?"

"With pleasure!" said Madame Sybil decisively. "After all the trouble we have had with this wretched revolution, we could not have a pleasanter change. Do you say that you start at ten, Captain Peters? Don't you think you could give me another hour? You know a woman isn't like a sailor, always ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice. She wants to pack. Don't you think you could make it eleven?"

"Madame," replied the skipper with one of his very best bows, "sooner than put a lady to any inconvenience in that way, I'll take it on myself to stretch my orders by a couple of hours. Will twelve o'clock suit you?"

"Perfectly," she said. "The President's launch shall be at the bottom of your gangway steps as the clock strikes, so far as I am concerned."

As the cathedral bells were chiming mid-day, Tristam, who had just been up to the palace and paid his five hundred pounds to Don Gregorio and come back on board the *Pocahontas* with the signed concession and a lengthy, but hastily scribbled note from Madame Sybil in his pocket, to which he had already replied with a single word over his signature, saw the presidential launch leave the end of the jetty and run alongside the *Minnehaha*, whose anchors were already hauled short.

A minute or two afterwards his glasses showed him Don Gregorio and Madame Sybil standing on the deck of the yacht shaking hands with Captain Peters. At the same moment the Dominican colours ran up the flag-staff at the stern, the next her screws began to revolve and she glided ahead over her anchors.

Tristam, who was standing forward near the conning-tower with Courtland and the two lieutenants, said, as he took his cap off and bowed to Madame Sybil:

"Courtland, with your permission we'll have a bit of a speed trial outside. At any rate, I suppose that's what Captain Peters expects, and there is no object in disappointing him."

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"I'm there!" he replied. "If we can't have a fight, a race will suit me down to the ground. I'll go and tell the skipper."

"And you, gentlemen," Tristam went on, turning to the two lieutenants, "will you oblige me by signalling to the *Hermione* and the *New York* to follow us at their best speed, and to keep on round the coast as far as the entrance to Samana Bay, where they will probably pick us up again. I have the best of reasons for doing this, and I'll explain matters fully when we get outside."

"I'll make the private signal to the *Hermione*," replied Lieutenant Stockton, "and she can pass it on to the *New York*. The little skipper won't understand it then. He'll just think it's a signal to follow."

As he moved away to do this Muriel and Gwynneth came up arm-in-arm to ask what the meaning of all the sudden blowing off of steam and rattling of winches meant.

"Well, you see," replied Tristam, "the *Minnehaha* is putting to sea, and we're going after her to have a sort of speed trial, and later on we hope to pick up Lorrain and her ladyship."

"And that means that you're going to fight them somewhere," said Muriel, turning a trifle pale for the moment. "For I don't suppose you expect to pick up Mr. Lorrain without a fight."

"It may come to that," replied Tristam a little gravely. "But I hardly think so. Still, if you would prefer it, we could put you ashore at the British Consulate, or I'm sure Captain Arbuthnot would be delighted to receive you on the *Magicienne*."

"Oh, certainly not!" she said, and Gwynneth nodded decided acquiescence at the same time. "We haven't come as far as this to be left out at the end, and besides, if you go I'm going."

"Very well," he said. "We shall be only too glad to have your company, of course, and, after all, I don't suppose there'll be anything more exciting than a good steaming race. Ah! there she goes."

The *Pocahontas*, looking about twice her size, came along a couplo of cables behind her, and both saluted the warships as they passed. The *Hermione* and *New York* were already under way, standing outside and waiting to take what part they could in the race. Both yachts saluted the *Magicienne's* flag as they passed at a speed of about twelve knots, with the impatient steam roaring from their pipes. As the *Pocahontas* went by the *Magicienne's* men cheered her, and Captain Peters, standing proud, happy, and confident once more on the bridge of his beloved craft, laughed quietly as he heard it, and said to Don Gregorio and Madame Sybil, who were standing beside him:

"I don't call that quite polite to us, but I guess Mr. Tristam will want more solid comfort than a whoop like that when that hooker's busted her boilers trying to keep track of *us*. Now we'll quicken up a bit."

He put his hand on the telegraph handle and sent the signal: "Half Speed" to the engine-room. This meant nominally fifteen knots, and almost simultaneously a faint tinkle came from the *Pocahontas*. Captain Peters grinned as he heard it, and turned his glasses intently on her for two or three minutes. The two yachts were moving at exactly the same speed, and the *Hermione* and *New York* had now joined in and were steaming abreast about half a mile to the southward.

"I wonder what in thunder those fellows think they are going to do!" said the skipper, continuing his running commentary, speaking partly to himself and partly to the others. "They know darned well that they daren't fire a shot, and if it amuses them to convoy us a bit of the way, they can just burn as much of Uncle Sam's coal or Queen Victoria's as they want to."

"Then you don't think there'll be any fighting?" said Madame Sybil, with an air of relief.

"No, ma'am; at least, not till the Seenyor gets on board. My orders are to run, not fight, and you'll see a run inside the next hour that'll make them brass-bound fellows on board them old fish-kettles over there open their eyes just about as wide as they'll go. I wonder what speed that chap behind has got. Let's try him at twenty."

The telegraph bell tinkled again, and Madame Sybil felt the bridge begin to quiver under her, and, although the day was almost absolutely calm, the wind began to rush past her ears and through her hair. The bell was almost instantly echoed as before, and again Captain Peters took his glass, only to find that the distance between the two yachts hadn't increased by a yard; but the two cruisers had now evidently got all they could do. The smoke was pouring out of their funnels in dense black volumes that looked solid enough to walk upon, and the *Hermione* was beginning to forge a little ahead of the *New York*.

"Bully for you, sonnies!" chuckled the skipper again. "Stoke up, you'll want all your steam to keep sight of us soon."

They were well clear of the land now and in deep water, and steering a course by about east to south. The sea was one wide, waveless expanse of long, lazy, oily-looking rollers, and in absolutely perfect condition for a steaming race.

"I guess it's about time to say good-bye," said the skipper, after another look round with his glasses, and he sent down the signal for twenty-five knots. Then he went on, turning to Madame Sybil:

"I hope you won't think me rude, ma'am, if I suggest that you'd better go down on deck and get behind something. In another minute or two it'll be blowing up here fit to take the horns off a cow."

"If you don't mind, Captain Peters," she replied, "I'd rather stop up here and risk the wind. One can see so much better, and really it's getting quite exciting."

"As you please, ma'am—as you please; but if you get your hair blown out by the roots—well, you won't blame me. Anyhow, there's the wheel-house you can go into when it gets too strong."

"For me, I shall go below," said Don Gregorio, "and take a smoke; it is not comfortable here any longer."

While he was climbing down, Captain Peters again turned his glass on the *Pocahontas*, and, somewhat to his displeasure, found that, instead of being half a mile or so behind, as she should have been, she was still only about three cables. The war-ships were visibly dropping behind.

"That's pretty tall steamin', Mr. Tristam," he said. "I own up I didn't think it of you, but anyhow I see you mean to run us down if you can. Waal, we'll see. Jackson, make the course east south-east."

As he said this he sent another signal to the engine-room, and to the astonishment and envious admiration of the officers of the two cruisers, which were now doing their very utmost and making a bare twenty knots, if that, the beautiful craft swung slightly round and went skimming across their bows at a good thirty knots an hour.

"Now, mister," he continued, turning his glasses on the *Pocahontas* again. "I guess you've got to hump yourself some if you don't want to say good-afternoon. Twenty-five you may do, but thirty——"

He stopped and stared with his eyes glued to his glasses, and his teeth audibly gritting on each other. The *Pocahontas* was *not* falling behind, and what was more, the steam was still singing merrily from the escape-pipes, and that showed that she still had something in hand.

"Waal I'm darned," he muttered between his clenched teeth. And then he went down on deck and sent a quartermaster to the chief engineer. The gaunt, dreamy-looking man of machinery came up from the engine-room with a flush on his thin cheeks and a bright light in his eyes. His beloved engines were making 400 revolutions a minute, and he was beginning to live.

"Well, Captain," he said, "we're doing a good thirty, and the engines are working to perfection. Eh? What's that?" he went on with a little start, as he looked aft and saw the *Pocahontas* still hanging stubbornly on the quarter. "D'you mean to say we haven't shaken her off yet?"

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"I mean to say, Mr. Pinner," replied the skipper with a distinct snap in his voice, "that if we're doing thirty, she's doing thirty. There she is. Every time I've rung my bell I've heard hers go, and, judging by them pipes, she's got a bit in hand still. How much have you got?"

The engineer looked a little anxiously at the beautiful white shape that was flying through the water astern of them at a speed so exactly regulated that the two yachts seemed stationary. "I can give you three more knots with safety, Captain, and five more with a certain amount of risk. We haven't got the oil blast on yet."

"Then put it on right away," said the skipper, "and give us all you can without taking any risk. When the Seenyor gets on board he can drive her for all she's worth, but there is no need for a bust-up just now."

"Very well, Captain. You shall have the other three

Sent for the chief engineer again.

knots within ten minutes. Then I think you'll find our friend will begin to drop behind."

"Great snakes, I hope so!" said the skipper, turning aft and taking a cigar out of his case. "I reckon the Seenyor'd be pretty wild if he found there was another craft afloat that the *Minnehaha* couldn't show her heels to. I wonder where in thunder Tristam found her. Now if we only had both of them. Waal, we'll see about that later on. I'd give more'n twenty-five cents to be able to put a shell through those funnels, and I reckon the Seenyor *will* do it too if Mr. Tristam wants to make any trouble, but I would like to know how much the engineer of that craft has up his sleeve. Ah, now she's feeling it again!"

The quivering deck under his feet seemed to grow steadier as he spoke, but this only meant that the vibrations were more rapid. The green swathes of water swirled away faster than ever astern, and the foam-bubbles churned up by the whirling screws swept away so fast that the wake looked like a track of smooth snow. Minute by minute the speed of the flying craft increased. He cast another look back at the *Pocahontas*, and went on the bridge again.

The hand on the dial of the speed-indicator had already passed thirty-two knots, and was wavering on to the thirty-three. Again his glasses went up and again he could see no difference in the relative positions of the two yachts. He looked round at the dial again; the hand was touching the thirty-three. Again his glasses went on to the *Pocahontas* and now—yes, the white, outward-curved prow, with its gilded head scroll-work, began to go back, ever so slowly, but still back out of the field of vision.

"Got him!" said Captain Peters, putting his glasses down, with a quiet smile that had a lot of meaning in it. "I guess that's your limit, Mr. Tristam, and at a pinch I've two more knots, but I won't give those away just now."

He walked leisurely down from the bridge and sent for the chief engineer again. He came up looking brighter and happier, and ten years younger than before.

"Well, Captain Peters," he said, rubbing his perspiring hands together. "How will that do? Ah, now he is dropping astern. But a wonderful craft, Captain Peters, a wonderful craft. I wouldn't have believed that anything afloat could have held on to us for so long. I wonder where she was built and who made her engines?"

"Bully for you, Mr. Pinner, bully for you and your engines!" said the skipper, clapping him on the shoulder. "Never you mind who made his. Now just you go and slow her down to ten knots and then we'll split a bottle of the best, for I guess we've earned it."

All this time the excitement on board the *Pocahontas* had, as may be easily imagined, been growing higher and higher. The desperate ardour of the chase had got into everybody's blood, men and women, civilians and fighting-men alike, and at last the chief engineer had come on the bridge to Courtland to tell him that the yacht was making thirty-two knots an hour, and that she had barely another half-knot in her. The words were hardly out of his mouth before a screaming roar of escaping steam blared out from the *Minnehaha*. She seemed to stop dead on the water, and the next minute the *Pocahontas*, flying through the water at nearly forty statute miles an hour, had swept past her and forged several hundred yards ahead.

"Broken down!" said Courtland curtly. "I don't think we shall want that other half knot, Mr. Foster. We've got his measure, I think. Well, Tristram, what do you think of the *Pocahontas*?"

"A daisy!" laughed Tristram, "if I may venture to make use of the American language. What a gorgeous pirate she'd make. Hullo! That fellow's altered his course. Take care he isn't fooling you, Courtland. There is evidently a pretty smart man in command over there."

"Not much fear of that!" said Courtland confidently. "We've got him in speed, and we're much heavier armed if it comes to a scrap. Now I guess we'd better slow up, too, or we shall lose him. Captain Ferguson, will you do the needful?"

Then the steam roared out from the pipes in relief of the panting boilers, the revolutions of the engines dropped from 420 to 212 and the yacht slowed down to fifteen knots. He swung round on the same course as the *Minnehaha* was making. In half an hour they were together again heading a little more to the eastward. Whether or not anything had happened to the *Min ehaha's* machinery, all that could be seen from the *Pocahontas* was that she made no attempt to do more than ten knots. The afternoon waned into evening and the evening darkened into night. The night was cloudy and bade fair to be very dark, just as Lorrain, far away up the Ozama, was just then wishing it to be. Both yachts showed their lights then in the usual way and so they went on through the night round Saona Island, up through the Mona Passage, and round by Cape Macao and Cape St. Raphael until the darkest hour before the dawn. Then suddenly out went the *Minnehaha's* light, leaving only a black spot on the water melting into the surrounding darkness.

(To be continued.)

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The Curé's Story.

We were sitting down to supper.

It was the last night that I was to spend under the hospitable roof of the Ibach parsonage. On the morrow I was to start for Paris *en route* to London.

A sprained ankle and a shoulder badly bruised, owing to a nasty fall on the Gibal, had compelled me to seek the assistance of a doctor, and, luckily, I found him in Father Seydell, the curé of Ibach, under whose wise treatment my progress had been rapid.

Supper had always been the meal at which conversation flowed freest. At supper the curé was wont to recount the small experiences of the day, and at supper I would often put in a reminiscence of the old hunting county in the Midland shires, where I had spent my first youth.

Father Seydell was a good listener. To anything I had to say about Loamshire folk and Loamshire ways he would listen with undisguised interest and intelligence alert.

Once, in the middle of a narrative, I asked him point-blank if he knew anybody in Galsworthy. He was filling his evening pipe, but stopped suddenly at the mention of the dear old Loamshire village which claims me for son; and looked up quickly as if recognising the sound of a familiar name. "No," he answered slowly; "he knew no one—nobody at all in England. He had never seen the country, and had no acquaintance amongst its people."

Our frugal repast being ended, and the talk beginning to drag, I started up sagacity in animals. The curé had shown himself a great lover of the four-footed friends of man, and apparently had a large fund of information regarding them to draw upon. I began a story about a horse which had belonged to Squire Galsworthy, of Galsworthy Park. But this evening my narrative somehow failed to interest. The good father listened only from habit. My words seldom got beyond his ears.

The gathering gloom of a dull autumn evening filled the chamber; a wood fire burnt on the hearth and threw weird shadows on the walls. Father Seydell sat silent and motionless, staring at the logs without seeing them, and neglecting the pipe and jar which thoughtful hands had placed within easy reach of his arm.

My wandering thoughts, going to and fro in search of an explanation, were still busy creating imaginary woes, when the door was pushed gently open, and Anna, the fat housewife, came forward, bearing in one hand the little copper lamp, and, in the other, a long, narrow bottle, which proved to be a sample of fine old Gallenspitz, brought out from its hiding-place in honour of the parting guest.

Placing the lamp on the table, Anna drew the cork and carefully filled the tall green glasses. For a moment she lingered near the door, then vanished as silently as she had appeared. I smoked away solemnly, and awaited events. Presently, with a quick, impulsive movement, the curé pushed away his glass, spilling some of the contents, and, thrusting a hand into his bosom drew thence what I supposed to be some saintly token belonging to the service of his church. To my surprise, however, it proved to be a locket. Just a bright, gleaming silver locket, such as women wear; but of a shape and size which had long gone out of fashion. It was attached to a narrow ribbon of black silk that passed twice round the neck of the wearer.

If no relic of the church, it was a relic of human life and sweet human affection. Evidently, too, it had gathered about it memories both sacred and cherished.

Opening the pretty trinket with tender hands, the curé raised it reverently to his lips. There must have been virtue in the action, for it operated like a charm. The atmosphere began to clear immediately—the gloomy vapours to roll themselves away, and Father Seydell to recover somewhat of the *bonhomie* and geniality which had made my stay at the parsonage more of a pleasant interlude than a painful necessity.

"*Souvenir du temps passé*," he said, smiling rather mournfully as he extended the locket towards me.

A few strands of light flaxen hair skilfully worked into a simple design was all the treasure it contained.

"You shall hear its history," continued my worthy friend, and the locket was closed with a snap and returned to its place.

"The story is not a long one; but it concerns a countryman of yours, whose offence against myself I have forgiven. Yet the blood of the innocent shall not cry unto Heaven in vain. God Himself will be their Avenger."

The words were spoken with an emotion that revealed the curé in a light that was altogether unexpected. It showed that a man's heart beat under the priest's soutane. For a moment he paused; then, in the calm, steady, even tones that were habitual to him, he proceeded:

"My present age is fifty-three. I look back over the nine-and-twenty years which separate the parish priest of Ibach from the events connected with the silver token, which day and night lies always next my heart, and find myself chief cattle-tender in the Schächenthal. I enjoyed the fullest confidence of the Count, my master, and had under my orders many herdsmen and shepherds. It was I who selected the grazing ground. It was I who chose the cattle for market. Mine was a pleasant enough life. Honest work and willing hands make a contented mind. I lived on the best terms with the simple people amongst whom my father had cast in his lot, in the hope that change of settlement would heal the deep wound which the loss of my mother had made in his heart. But ere the first snow fell upon her grave, the poor man himself followed her, and left me an orphan in a land of strangers. A child soon finds friends. I was five years old, and a stout, sturdy lad. Happiest season, the springtide of life, when the days are long, uneventful, and man's estate looks a great way off!

"As soon as convenient, I entered the service of his

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Excellency by favour of his steward, and rose rapidly, until I was appointed head cattleman in the Schächenthal.

"Every soul in the valley, from Burglen away to Linthal, had a kind word and welcome for Franz Seydell; and Franz had a friendly nod and smile for each. But it was to the Widow Sulzer's that Franz went oftenest; and it was there he stayed longest. Mère Sulzer kept the Falcon, and put up the few tourists who, in their summer wanderings, would stray into the quiet valley to enjoy its tranquil beauty, and taste the sober pleasures of pastoral life.

"It was Marguerite Sulzer who took Franz Seydell so often to the Falcon. Tall and supple of figure, graceful as the lilies over which she bent, Marguerite was the belle of the valley. Her face was one to dream over. You may see it to-day in the Munich Gallery. Look for Carl Haag's "Maid of the Mill." Crowned with a glory of pale golden hair, which flowed in long ripples down to her feet, her head was the praise of sculptors; she carried it so superbly. And her eyes, blue and clear as the sky in summer, looked out shyly upon the world, and spoke a language more tender than words.

"What wonder, if many of the young fellows cast glances of admiration at the landlady's pretty daughter and envied the good fortune of light-hearted Franz, whose frequent visits to the rustic inn were slyly encouraged by the dainty, blooming maiden, and certainly were not frowned upon by the prudent, industrious housemother.

"On one of my journeys with the cattle I saw the pretty bauble which you have seen to-night. It was in the Kirchestrass at Constanz. For a man whose earnings were but sixty francs a month, the price was high. But what worshipper ever counted the cost of the sacrifice offered to his divinity? I bought it.

"On my return I went straight to the Falcon. The present from Constanz made me a welcome wooer. That night the 'old, old story' was told to no careless or unwilling ear. Before I had left the house Marguerite had pledged herself.

"Almost with the advent of the travelling season, there came into the Schächenthal a young Englishman of distinguished manners and good appearance. He was attended by his own servant, and travelling, so he gave out, for the recovery of his health. He was going up to the baths of Stachelberg.

"At our first meeting I conceived an unaccountable dislike to him. It was unreasonable, but I confess to feeling glad when I learnt that his visit was not likely to be long. Mother Sulzer was not so well pleased. The Englishman was the first visitor of the season, and evidently belonged to the class which can afford to pay for attention. But while the good mother would have delayed his departure I was anxious for him to be gone; and fervently did I hope never to see his handsome face in the Schächenthal again.

"But in a few weeks the English stranger was amongst us once more. This time he came alone, came, he said, to stay. 'The valley,' he told Marguerite, 'was a haven of rest to a weary soul.' God forgive him!

"The men lived like lords that year. The tap was always running, the kitchen always busy. The Englishman's money flowed like rivulets in spring.

"If fear lends us wings, love sharpens our sensibilities, and I was not slow to discover that a hateful presence had stepped between my love and me.

"From being merry as the sunshine and open as the day, having neither trouble to conceal nor sorrow to hide, Marguerite grew constrained, nervous, and shy. If I upbraided her she would take refuge in tears. 'I was jealous,' she said, 'and frowned at her so frequently that I frightened her. No wonder she was unhappy!'

"One day I noticed a necklace she was wearing. It was composed of curious-looking, greenish-coloured stones, strung on fine gold threads. She blushed, hesitated, and stammered that the English milord had given it her—he had wished her to accept it as a small acknowledgment of services rendered. He was leaving, she said, at the end of the month, and to refuse his gift would surely have been a breach of good manners, and certainly very ungrateful. Would I give her my permission to wear it?—for she would never do so again unless she had my consent.

"'And, see!' she ran on, in her soft, prattling way, 'here is your locket, sweetheart. It has never left my neck, Franz, since your hand placed it there. I sleep with it on my bosom, and every night when I lay down to rest, it is with your name upon my lips. Are you satisfied now, foolish boy that you are?

"It was a week exactly from the date of this incident that I received a summons to meet his Excellency at Constanz. It was a long journey in the forties. I was gone sixteen days. As I travelled back, counting the slow miles impatiently—I was bringing good news—news that I hoped Marguerite would rejoice to hear. His Excellency had been pleased to appoint me under-steward——I beguiled the tedium of the way with 'castles in Spain.'

"On reaching Aesch, however, I got news which staggered me. My limbs trembled, while my ears greedily drank in the words—words which destroyed my hopes and laid waste my happiness. All faint and weary, I pushed on without stopping to rest.

"Mother Sulzer, I found in bed. The severity of the blow had nearly killed her. The Englishman had gone, but Marguerite—my Marguerite, had fled with him.

"How I got through the next few weeks I cannot tell.

"The summer went, and winter came; but of Marguerite Sulzer the passing months brought no tidings to the valley, which for eighteen years had been her home.

"It was July of the following year, and I had just returned from a visit to the chalets and herdsmen on the Urner Boden, perhaps the highest pasturage in Switzerland. About halfway through the village, I noticed three women standing together. They were talking. Their voices did not reach me, but their faces, I saw, were sad and serious. As I drew near, they ceased speaking, and looked at me with the look which had struck a chill to my heart twelvemonths before. I knew then that Marguerite had come back."

"Weak, exhausted and miserable, she had crawled home to die. Her first inquiry was for me. I was at the old quarters they told her. She waited two days. I made no sign and she sent for me. My first impulse was to refuse, and I hardened my heart. But where is the man can withstand the pleading of a mother's tears? With streaming eyes, Mother Sulzer implored me to consent. 'For the love of Heaven! Franz,' she urged, 'come, come with me. Till she has looked into your face, the priest himself can bring no blessing—the poor child can get no rest. She has suffered more than she will tell. As you hope for pardon, Franz, come!'

"What could I do? I went, and the mute appeal of the silver locket, which lay in trustful confidence upon her breast, moved me as no words would have done.

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More eloquent than passionate entreaty, its silent pleadings sounded in my ears louder than sobs and cries and doleful lamentations. I trembled with an emotion I had thought nothing could ever awaken in me again. In that moment the old love came back upon me in full flood; and I forgave her as freely as I hope to be forgiven.

"'I am unworthy, Franz,' she murmured; 'unworthy to wear it, unworthy even to touch it; but——you will let me keep it to the end? Without it I should have died upon the way—with it I shall die here in peace. Then it spoke to me of hope; now it will speak to me of pardon.'

"Of all else she had stripped herself. Of all save the silver locket, the gift of honest love in happier days. Upbraid and condemn her as it might, my own poor gift had been religiously preserved. 'No, Franz,' she whispered faintly; 'no, sooner than part with it I would have perished by the road. It burnt me, burnt me like fire; yet I wore it by day and slept with it at night, though often it felt as if a burning coal was laid upon my heart. It was the locket, Franz, your locket, dear, which gave me courage to begin the journey and found me strength to finish it.'

"The graceless vagabond had taken her to Berne, induced her to sign a paper which, doubtless, he intended, if necessary, to be used against her—the place, he told her, was the office of the English Consulate—persuaded her that the affixing of her signature in the presence of the officials made her his wife according to English law, and then basely deserted her in Paris.

"In little more than a week Marguerite Sulzer and her infant babe were laid to rest in the quiet God's-acre at Untschüchen. To-day she would have been forty-seven."

The curé bent his head reverently, his lips moved, and the low ticking of the clock seemed the louder from the sudden hush which had fallen directly on the chamber. Resuming, he proceeded quickly:

"Some months later I obtained my discharge, and went into Wurtemberg. There I entered a seminary, studied medicine, and qualified for the Church. The remainder of my days I determined to devote to works of brotherly love and Christian charity. After the lapse of nearly thirty years my conscience and judgment approve my resolution.

"Throughout all that time I have striven to forget the name of the man whose lying lips brought shame and sorrow upon Marguerite Sulzer. Yesterday, and again to-night, I have heard it spoken. You were speaking, I think, of a Squire Galsworthy of Galsworthy Park. Would that be Thomas Galsworthy?"

"The same, Father. Squire Tom all through Loamshire."

"Is the man living?"

"No," I replied. "Squire Tom was killed in the hunting-field six years ago come Christmas. When his master fell, the horse stopped dead and stood over him whinnying till he brought assistance. But the Squire was past helping—his neck was broken. He left no family and the estate went to a nephew."

"'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,'" fervently ejaculated the curé.

There was a tap at the door. Anna came in with the candles, and Father Seydell bade me "Good-night." with a promise of God-speed in the morning.

H. Hunter.

RESULT OF CHRISTMAS COMPETITIONS.

No. 1.

The prize of £2 goes to Miss H. Giles, 7, Stafford Street, Old Bond Street, W.

A copy of "When the Birds Begin to Sing" goes to the following twelve:

Miss L. Higgs, Andersonstown, Falls Road, Belfast; G. H. Chittenden, 18, Lacon Road, East Dulwich; G. F. Matthews, 20, West Street, Chichester; Mrs. H. Rogers, 18, Baronsfield Road, East Twickenham; F. H. Parker, "Wensley," Manor Road, Wallington, Surrey; J. Shain, Longfellow House, 29a, Palmerston Road, Bowes Park, N.; E. Shalcross, 71, Myddleton Street, Clerkenwell; W. E. James, "Rosedale," Leighton-on-Lea, Essex; Prof. G. Townend, 5, Devonshire Place, East Barnet Road, New Barnes; W. Leslie, 1, Bannermill, Cottages, Aberdeen; Mrs. Dettmer, 46, Kingsgate Road, West Hampstead, N.W.; Miss A. Bullock, Blaby House, Drayton Road, King's Heath.

No. 2.

£2. W. H. Gillett, Gwithian, Hayle, Cornwall.

A copy of "Valdar the Oft-born" to the following twelve: C. W. V. Clarke, 5, Grosvenor Road, Rugby; A. Randall, 3, Seymour Road, Harringay; D. Gilchrist, 29, West Scotland Street, Plantation, Glasgow; S. Bevan, 8, Stanley Terrace, Mt. Pleasant, Swansea; Miss Warwick, 16, Cornfield Terrace, Eastbourne; C. Clarke, Osborne Stables, East Cowes, Isle of Wight; E. Coulson, 36, Prairie Street, Queen's Road, Battersea; G. F. Saunders, 37, North Road, Bishopston, Bristol; Miss M. E. Wycherley, 10, St. Julians Friars, Shrewsbury; F. Morgan, 1, East Street, Bexley Heath; H. Robinson, The Parsonage, Heywood, Westbury, Wilts; F. M. Kew, 3, Albert Terrace, Farnboro', R.S.O., Kent.

No. 3.

£2. D. Gilchrist, 29, West Scotland Street, Glasgow.

A copy of "Guilty Gold" to the following twelve:

W. A. Smith, 33, York Terrace, Leigh, Lancashire; G. V. Wood, 2, Woodside Terrace, Onchan, Isle of Wight; H. J. Taylor, Collegiate School, Glastonbury; J. K. Engall, 1, Springfield Lodge, Springfield Road, Guilford; F. C. Spendelow, 45, Ling Street, Holt Road, Liverpool; R. Page, 43, Cadogan Place, Chelsea; Miss A. Sweet, 50, Portman Street, Rowbarton, Taunton; F. M. Whittingham, 5, Alvington Terrace, Cattedown Road, Plymouth; A. Coulson, 2, Notts Cottage, Chase Side, Enfield; Miss A. Walker, 14, Esk Terrace, Whitby, Yorks; W. Gibbins, 7, Church Grove, St. Andrews Road, Small Heath, Birmingham; J. D. Lister, 105, Noel Street, Nottingham.

No. 4.

£2. F. M. Whittingham, 5, Alvington Terrace, Cattedown Road, Plymouth.

A copy of "The Impudent Comedian" to the following twelve:

H. Gillett, Gwithian, Hayle, Cornwall; R. H. Williams, Wellington Road, Camborne, Cornwall; W. Ashton, The Drive, Chingford, Essex; Miss L. Grey, Clovelly, 100, King's Head Road, Catford, S.E.; W. Gyde, The Barracks, Warley, Essex; J. H. Hutchinson, Ivy Cottage, Hollybank Road, Drumcondra, Dublin; H. Owen, 32, High Street, Wimbledon; T. Marsden, Studley House, Upper Belgrave Road, Clifton, Bristol; G. W. Blake, St. Martin's Terrace, Salisbury; C. Kille, 1, The Avenue, Minehead, Somerset; Miss A. Walker, 14, Esk Terrace, Whitby; A. Coulson, 2, Notts Cottage, Chase Side, Enfield.

No. 5.

£1. G. Cooper, 75, Maryville Street, Donegall Pass, Belfast.

£1. Miss M. Wood, "Kelton," South Croxted Road, West Dulwich.

A copy of "Jumbles" to the following twelve:

F. Jones, Sutton Weaves, near Warrington, Cheshire: S. H. Gordon Able, Onecote School, Leek, Staffordshire; W. King, 105, Gaythorne Road, W. Bowling, Bradford, Yorkshire; E. Jay, 12, Clwyd Street, New Brighton, Cheshire; G. Beadle, Elsie Villa, Kinver Road, South Sydenham; Miss E. Bringloe, 34, Tremlett Grove, Junction Road, N.; Miss V. E. Carter, The High School, Lichfield, Staffordshire; Miss G. Mayfield, 18, Stamford Road, Page Green, Tottenham; W. Collins, 24, Oglander Road, Maxted Road, East Dulwich; Miss H. Stille, 25, Snowdon Road, Eccles, Manchester; C. Ambler, Prospect View, Thornton, near Bradford, Yorks; E. Beach, 3, Newchatel Road, Perry Hill, Catford.

RESULT OF PUDDING COMPETITION.

(MAP OF ENGLAND.)

£2. Miss B. G. Jeffrey, 4, Albert Terrace, St. Edmunds, Church Street, Salisbury, Wilts.

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MERESIA

CHAPTER XXIII.

How can One Tell?

Spring had come, with its plethora of life, its atmosphere of beginnings, its green sunlit days suffused with poetry—surface poetry, such as the singing of proud father birds—the cooing of the dove upon her nest, and the universal motherhood of the natural world.

All things aged and experienced seemed out of place—intrusions—and the country, with its creative powers, and its scope for imagination, gave back to Meresia some taste of her not long absent girlhood, which Aladros had gathered in the bud and killed.

She was staying at her old home, occupying her old room, with the same aimless little ornaments decorating the shelves, the same pictures, the same books, but not the same Meresia! The past, which had left but faint traces in her face, could not fail to express its tragedy in her eyes.

It was a haunting, indescribable expression, that none failed to perceive, and all felt, hardly seeming to represent the mystery of suffering, but giving the impression of pain nevertheless, or rather the concealment of something too terrible to name.

Meresia had changed. She was a stranger among the old situations, branded by her crime, though no one saw the brand. As she met the familiar faces at every turn she thought of her secret, half bitterly, half triumphantly, and wondered if she had yet to pay the price.

Perhaps she would tell it at the end—gasp out the hideous details one by one to incredulous ears. They would say her mind was wandering and let her pass out of life unstained; speak of her as a child of Heaven, pure, untempted, bright with the image of God. Why, even since her husband's death she had found out to what lengths the charity of the quick may go towards the dead. A thousand virtues previously unexisting were now attributed to Alfonso, illuminating his memory with artificial light. People spoke to her of his tenderness, his liberality, his self-denial, for death had laid aside all his pride, his selfishness, ferocity, sensuality, and self-absorption! No, he had been kind, well-beloved, a benefactor in all the vicissitudes of his past existence, and this for the consolation of his widow, which filled her with secret disgust and anger.

After an elaborate description of Alfonso's goodness, given by Mrs. Milford for her daughter's benefit, Meresia took her severely to task, showing so much marked disapproval that her mother's vexation was aroused.

"If it is not true," she exclaimed, "you should be the last in the world to proclaim the fact—you who bear his name."

"Yes, I bear it mother, and find it not the least heavy of my burdens. I would give anything to dispense with it—to be Meresia Milford again."

"Why?"

"Because by being so called I am daily reminded of"—she paused for a word—"of my imperfection."

"Really, I do not understand."

"No, I hardly expected you would. Can't you imagine, though, that while I lived away from you, there may have been passages in my life of which I never speak—passages of an unsavoury nature, that even now are bitter to my taste? You have formed a habit of idealising the dead, and of painting my married life immoderately beautiful. This chafes and irritates me, when I know what weak, frail, fallen ideals you are holding up to worship. Human nature is a poor thing to exhibit—at best it must bear the traces of ruin—human nature, guilt, disorder, seem inseparably connected."

"But, my dear child, you must forget and forgive any little faults on the part of your husband."

"Oh! forgiveness is easy now, I do not pride myself on that. It must be a consolation to everyone to feel that, sooner or later, they will only be spoken of kindly. We are all subject to the law of death—but we are almost too proud to own it while we live. It is an implied insult to our physical strength."

"You are morbid and tired, Meresia, the dullness of these sad days have affected you morally as well as bodily. We thought—your father and I—that it might please you if we invited Dr. Serano to come down to-day to stay over Sunday, it makes a little change."

"Thank you, mother, but I don't want him. I am quite happy here with you."

"Just as I expected! You have no heart, poor child, to see anyone, and that is why I wrote without telling you, to Dr. Serano. Now it is too late to put him off; he is coming by the afternoon train, and bringing a friend who was staying with him in London. It will do you good to pull yourself together, to have people about that talk of outside things. I shall never forget Dr. Serano's kindness and forethought at the time of your trouble! He might have been a brother."

"Still I have no sisterly affection for Dr. Serano, and I wish you had not asked him. He always recalls that terrible night so vividly, and I never feel comfortable or happy in his presence. How soon will he be here?"

"Almost directly; the carriage has gone to the station."

Meresia's heart beat faster with a certain dread alarm. All unprepared, she was to meet again the partner of her crime. The secret between them made companionship unpleasant, for if she seemed gay, then his eyes convicted her, and if she proved melancholy, he suspected her of regretting the deed, or perhaps of betraying herself through weakness or fear. The wider the space between them, the better for Meresia's peace of mind.

There were days, here in the old home, when that night of reality became as a half-forgotten dream, an impossible thing! Now it was to live once more, José Serano was coming, to bring the past back!

"I must have time to grow accustomed to the idea," Meresia told herself, "I will escape for a little while."

She fetched her hat, called the dog, and slipping out into the garden by a side door, walked quickly away from the house. The lanes were quiet and peaceful, alone with nature, she could find rest. Every turn of these narrow ways, overrun with weeds and grass, and trimmed on all sides by wild primroses and violets, brought back some memory of her childhood. The very ground was consecrated to affection as she recalled the happy hours, and

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every stile and hedge had a value that a stranger's soul could never know. Each recollection was entwined with the threads of her existence. She wandered on, sensible only to the sweet things around her—the leaves, the scent, the air, the sparkle of life everywhere, the bloom, the glow, the majesty.

Meresia's poetic temperament could but rejoice in the spring. The activity of growth thrilled her soul with its energy and sense of beauty. Yearnings to escape from her black past and visions of good too great for earth were working in her now. Emancipated from the daily sufferings of her mind—the galling thought of the shamed fate she deserved—Meresia inhaled the fresh breeze, and, flinging herself on a bank of primroses and grass, felt every power within her invigorated and renewed.

"Ah, if I could always feel strong and brave!" she sighed. "It is this constant musing, thinking, remembering, that wears away my mind and body! One cannot kill a man for nothing; one cannot expect to go free!"

As Meresia laid her hands tenderly on the mossy grass, and buried her face in the scent of the flowers, a sudden development of her sensibilities stirred her imagination to hopes of a vast and undefined good—to prospects of a boundless future! The present appeared too narrow for her, and yet no words could have expressed exactly what she desired. For the moment her faults and failings, her very crime itself sank into obscurity, and remained blissfully forgotten. Her eyes lost their mystery, and shone with the joy of childhood, or the anticipation of a possible angelhood. Yet if Meresia had only known, she was committing the greatest fault of all in being conscious of none.

Before her marriage she had never paused to study herself, or to search into her own motives and secret processes. They were the natural outcome of a healthy spirit! Alfonso first taught her to shroud herself in the gloom of melancholy, to feed upon a fevered sensibility, to glorify sin, and thus lowered irredeemably her standard of judgment and action.

Now, during these months of reaction since his death, she had feebly groped her way back to the light, and sought to find out the common mysteries of Nature, to learn something of her soul—something of her end!

There was nothing of the cowering, shuddering criminal in Meresia. She regarded her deed as a circumstance of her life decided by Heaven, and the strength of this conviction brought solace to the hopeless fret of the passing days in which she grew to own herself a murderess, to herself.

Sometimes she felt almost grateful to Aladros for having broken down in her mind the prejudices of education. But for viewing this murder through the medium of his logic, it must indeed appear terrible—appalling!

He boasted a superior intellect, the off-spring of his personal vanity. He never overruled his feelings or desires, and thus, plunging into error, dragged his wife down to his own level, who in silence, "the element in which great things fashion themselves," dared his death, and accomplished the same.

Alone on her primrose bank, Meresia seemed inspired, while a whole series of truths branched out before her vision. All her doubts and hopes, her mistakes, perplexities and mental conflicts, raised her to intercourse with the supernatural world. Mysteriously her spirit appeared in communion with spiritual realities; it was the working of unappeasable desire to investigate the great problems of human nature, human destiny and duty, by the light of a higher power.

So deep was her reverie, so real this lifting up from transitory things, that Meresia neither saw nor heard the approaching steps of Serano and his friend.

The two men paused, involuntarily ceased their talk, and looked upon the picture.

In her plain black dress Meresia appeared singularly girlish and astoundingly beautiful. The sunlight had changed her auburn hair to ruddy rich gold. Her eyes were softened with emotion of an unusual kind, stirred by the inner workings of the soul. She had caught the freshness of the spring day, the purity of the flowers, the anticipation in the atmosphere. As her hands lay lightly on the primrose heads, no one could have dreamt those small white hands were red with crime. As her eyes watched the feathery clouds chasing each other across the blue, few would have thought they had looked on the bitterest side of life; here amid sounds, and colours, and forms, all innocent of guilt.

José marvelled at the enigma. This was the woman who had poisoned her husband; this frail, fair thing on a bed of primroses, with the pensive lips and wistful eyes, she was the lawful prey of the gallows! He would have moved forward to break the spell eagerly, angrily, but his friend held him back.

The sight of Meresia kindled a fire in the stranger's heart that he could not analyse. Perhaps it was merely admiration, the momentary wonder experienced by those who see great natural beauty for the first time on lake or mountain, sea or shore. At first they are breathless, bewildered, but with custom the sensation fades, their dazzled eyes grow clear, and in five minutes they are *blasé* and turn to a fresh scene. Yes, perhaps it was only this.

"Is she a woman or an angel?" he asked Serano.

José's lips curled.

"All women are angels," he said in bitter sarcasm; "but to the eye of reason this is a human vision. She is the widow of Aladros."

"You did not prepare me for so much loveliness. A mere girl, with all her soul in her eyes."

As he spoke Meresia looked up and saw them. She shook off her dreams and sprang to her feet like a frightened animal. It was a rude awakening. Her voice trembled in welcoming them, and touched some kindred chord in the stranger's being that had never been played upon before. The touch kindled warmth and excited rapture.

"Allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Brockbank," said José Serano, watching her with his quiet, unchanging eyes, the eyes that to Meresia seemed piercing the outward surface, and dissecting the secret depths within. She turned to the stranger and offered her hand. It was part of her general niceness—Meresia's frank unreserve to strangers.

She saw a man of medium height, with a settled frown on his forehead, that remained through his smiles, which came spontaneously enough in her presence.

His was a face that, in spite of youth, looked wearied by hardships, and provoked by varying passions. A physiognomist would have called him jealous—petulant, but at the same time constant—enduring—a man who would under no circumstances change an opinion once formed, or swerve from a definite purpose.

"We are disturbing your reverie," he said.

Meresia smiled faintly, and glanced back at the impression left among the violets and primroses, crushed by her lounging.

"I am too old to dream," she replied. "Don't you think so, Dr. Serano?"

"Not too old," he answered; "shall we say too experienced? But without a little dreaming, happiness would be wholly lost—life loses its rapture through insensibility. Dream on, Mrs. Aladros, and do not deprive yourself of humanity's best enjoyment."

"I had almost forgotten the past," she said; "you have recalled it. After all, real life betters imagination, for the tales are true, and must needs be interesting if true! Do you know those lines—those very human lines:

"How can one tell which way one's heart may turn?
Back to the old, or for the newer yearn.
We are so young—we have so much to learn!
How can one tell? How can one tell?"

Her voice sank to a whisper. The stranger had never heard so mellow a tone.

"Ah! how, indeed?" he ejaculated.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

Man is Fire.

Life had proved no smooth rose-bed for Herbert Brockbank, and, strangely enough, from his earliest youth he had never expected it to be so. He was a man who breasted his troubles as a strong swimmer meets the waves of the sea—with a certain satisfaction and reckless defiance.

His singularly imprudent nature naturally made his journey through life stormier than it need have been. No love episodes had brightened or clouded the pages of his history till he saw Meresia on that quiet afternoon in the lane amongst the violets. The sight of her was a revelation to the man, and sent the blood coursing to his head as he gazed, silently wondering, and in no way trying to repress his ardour. Herbert Brockbank found it easier to dilate than to compress—hence, doubtless, the mistakes—the falls—of his career.

He had held women but lightly in esteem—as creatures barely worthy of notice. Now, with a mind prone to run to extremes, he glorified Meresia into an ideal of his own creating.

Here, at last, he was permitted to behold humanity in a perfect and delightful form, adorned with beauty, exalted by a rich vigour of thought, enhanced by the charm of a golden, mellow voice. His views were ecstatic, large, generous, so far as Meresia was concerned.

His first impression not only remained, but deepened, turning all that summer day to a dream of unsubstantial beauty. He had read of love upon first seeing, of passion stirred into being at a moment's notice, but he never believed in the truth of these tales. Now, in the twinkling of an eye, the thing had come to pass, was actually with him, proving itself in his own being with a certain mocking conviction.

"Halt, unbeliever!" he pictured Dame Nature saying, "come into the love age of the spring and judge for yourself. I will lift the veil and test your strength. I will show you Meresia in all her glory, and enthrone her as the goddess of your heart, with all her sins, with all her virtues; find them, sort them, keep them, or discard them. There she is, a woman, and nothing more!"

And he had looked—looked with all his eyes, as a blind man who finds light, to whom the brightness of the day has been a mystery since birth—and for the first time sees forms and moving creatures.

The wonder of it awoke him from a low, despondent state, and a new soul kindled in the man. He hardly appeared to himself as the same being, so fresh, tender, and animated were his feelings.

So they walked back to the house together—Meresia and Herbert Brockbank, shadowed by the woman's partner in crime, who left the conversation chiefly to them. In her manner, José marvelled that he could trace no sign of insincerity—no underlying hint of the dark, unforgotten days. Instead, he defined a tenderness of sensibility—a deep enthusiasm with an added charm of romance which coloured her talk and her actions. Elastic in movement, and erect in bearing, her ghastly deed had given her an air of self-reliance, rather than of shrinking. The sweetness of her ways were, he could see, captivating his friend, winning his confidence, warming his hopes, inflaming his passion.

This first meeting was the great root from which all the events of the future were to grow.

Meresia alone was perfectly unconscious of the workings of fate. Her joyousness sprang from the magnetism of the spring, and to the man at her side she was indifferent.

Her first impressions of him were nil, he made no impression at all, perhaps for the reason that after a preliminary glance she hardly looked at him. She talked because all the birds were talking to each other, with prattling sounds that made meaningless music.

Later in the day, when Nature's early closing hours brought back a taste of the winter, Meresia's light-heartedness vanished with the sunshine.

"Where are your spirits?" whispered José, as they stood apart together watching the fading light.

She held the tassel of the window blind between her fingers, and he noticed that they closed upon it suddenly with vehement pressure.

"My spirits go with the sun," she answered. "The whole world is a lifeless page when that has gone. It is the only thing that keeps the corpse out of sight!"

José drew back, then a servant came and shut the shutters.

Meresia took scant time over her toilette for dinner, since it was but the plain black gown of widowhood, and she found the drawing-room empty.

Taking a book, she sank into a low chair, behind a standard lamp.

Presently Herbert Brockbank came down, and seeing that she was unobserved, Meresia remained motionless from apathy.

He crossed to a table and picked up an old photograph of her as a girl, taken in the garden, with her dog in her arms, and the merriment of childhood in her face. He looked at it long and studiously, as if gazing upon something near and dear to him.

Meresia leant forward and spoke with a little catch in her voice.

"That is not me," she said; "not me, at least as I am now."

The man started, and had his face been less brown, he would have flushed a guilty red.

"You have not changed," he replied, "you are just the same."

Meresia smiled scornfully.

"It is a ghost," she said, "that girl died; I buried her long ago, or perhaps she is not the ghost, I am the resurrection of the dead girl, with the same outward form, but not the same spirit."

He laid the picture down.

"Then she no longer interests me," he answered. "Your theory is a true one, Mrs. Aladros—we change—we develop—we bury the old—we give birth to the new—we hurry on the law of Nature by dying a thousand times before the appointed hour. I think life would be less interesting if this were not the case, don't you?"

"I suppose we grow tired of ourselves. We want something different—something new. When we are good we want to be bad, and when we are bad we would give all the world to be good again."

"Beautiful women are a law unto themselves," he replied.

"And so expose their foolishness," added Meresia quickly. "They misunderstand the true rule of life. It is only after abiding by their own laws, and suffering immoderately in consequence, that they learn self-conquest is self-expansion, not self-repression!"

José came into the room as she spoke. Meresia half rose with a little nervous gesture new to her, and dropped the book on her lap.

José picked it up.

"I see you have been reading Rousseau's 'Eloise,'" he said, glancing at the cover.

"Yes. Rousseau is the only French author I have ever read who knows the way to the heart."

José smiled—anyone who observed could have detected a strong-rooted cynicism in the Spaniard's mien. Brockbank had a good eye for character, and summed up the doctor accurately. He saw that Serano had no great respect for his late friend's widow, and yet he divined something of the secret understanding existing between them. It annoyed and irritated him. If José did not love this woman, what else could there be between them, what tie—what private knowledge apart from the world?

The Spaniard was conscious of Brockbank's scrutiny.

"Why do I interest you?" he asked jokingly. "Is my tie crooked, or have I unwittingly offended in any smaller detail?"

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"I was thinking," replied Brockbank, "how rare a thing it is to find a man who has made his fortune through well-doing. Serano saved my life, Mrs. Aladros, when I was down with fever last summer—it is a saying that he has never let a patient die!"

The moment the words passed Herbert Brockbank's lips he would have given worlds to recall them, for in a flash he remembered that Aladros was a patient of this same doctor, and that Serano had actually been in the house at the time of the death.

Meresia broke the awkward pause that naturally followed so ill-advised a remark.

"Is it a very rare thing to make money by honest means?" she said, and her voice had lost none of its sweetness.

"I have only to quote a Spanish proverb in answer to that question," replied José with alacrity.

"Oh! I know your Spanish proverbs," Meresia declared; "they are all terribly cynical. By them a nation may be judged out of its own mouth. You can tell the character of a people better by their proverbs than by horoscopes, palmistry, or reading the forehead, the eyes, or even the nose, which betrays much!"

"Fancy reading a nose!" laughed José. "But I won't rob Brockbank of the superior Spanish wisdom, 'Renounce the Devil, and thou shalt wear a shabby coat.' So the only way to success is, according to native logic, through the Gate of Hell. Remember, please, I was educated in England, and I am no believer in the favourite sayings of my mother tongue, for this latter leads to only two things: be 'either rich or hanged.'"

Meresia turned a shade paler, but the crimson lamp concealed this. She did not trust herself to speak, for the very word "hanged" paralysed her faculties.

"This is not absolutely a cynic's pessimism," José continued, "which I can prove by the fact that 'the poorer houses contain the most honest people.' But words will not convince Mrs. Aladros. She does not believe even in deeds, resembling in that particular instance, the Spaniard's maiden aunt, to whom this same assertion is affixed."

"Your countrymen are very narrow-minded," said Meresia, finding her voice with an effort; "they reduce their study of human nature to a limited formula."

"One hundred tailors, one hundred millers, one hundred weavers—three hundred thieves! There is arithmetic for you!"

Meresia laughed scornfully, but it was a forced laugh, with no ring of mirth in its melody.

"That proverb has stood the test of centuries," murmured José.

"I see no error in it, but here are your good parents, Mrs. Aladros; let us bury our profane sayings with the advent of dinner."

The gong sounded as he spoke, and Meresia rose wearily—yet glad to escape the scathing cynicism of the Spanish doctor.

But the evening had barely begun, and the torture of the coming hours was still undreamt of. It was not till long after they had again returned from the dining-room that a chance whisper from Serano set Meresia's nerves tingling with fear, and painfully hastened the beating of her heart. He had asked her to show him some rare plant in the lighted conservatory that led from the hall, and Meresia—all ignorant of what was to follow—readily assented.

Herbert Brockbank, detained in conversation by Mr. Milford, watched the departing figures with envious eyes and jealous suspicions.

Perhaps, after all, he had been mistaken, and Serano loved this woman. Men frequently love the women they least respect when their beauty is such as Meresia's. So he soliloquised, and answered his host vaguely.

"When are you coming back to town?" asked José Serano somewhat abruptly of Mrs. Aladros.

She paused, surprised at a certain command in his tone, though it was but a question.

"I don't know."

"Next week?"

"I don't know."

The monotony of the replies annoyed him. He tapped his foot impatiently on the floor.

"Take my advice; return quickly—as early in the week as possible—and come straight to my house. I cannot talk to you here; I only came to-day to give you the hint. It may be necessary for you to leave England next week."

Meresia tottered back, white to her lips and trembling.

"To leave England!" she gasped. "Great Heaven!"

"Don't be frightened. There is no danger for you if you follow my directions to the letter; but if you fail——"

He shrugged his shoulders, with a gesture peculiarly terrifying to the woman.

"Tell me, for Heaven's sake, am I suspected?"

"Hush!"

They stepped back against a large flowering azalea, till Meresia's slight figure was almost lost in the white loveliness of prolific bloom.

Someone was crossing the hall and walking towards the conservatory. A moment later, and Herbert Brockbank, who had escaped his host, came eagerly in search of Mrs. Aladros.

The sight of José and Meresia confirmed his fears. This was undoubtedly an arranged meeting. They were neither of them looking at the rare plant on the opposite side, but each had a set purpose written on their faces. The woman was trembling, the man had his hand on her arm, and their conversation ceased abruptly as Herbert Brockbank entered.

They joined him hurriedly, Meresia unable to conceal her agitation, the more that the stranger's eyes gazed unsparingly upon her distress.

She excused herself on the plea of fatigue, and went early to bed. Serano's words were burning into her brain—torturing her by their brevity and vagueness. What fresh terror, what fatal development had come to light? It seemed so easy—with Serano's aid—and now her sin had found her out. He spoke of her having to leave England That must mean fleeing from justice, with the bloodhounds ever on her track, and the penalty to pay!

She crept to bed—the criminal at last—with evil shadows building unsubstantial gallows and half-realised torments in the dark atmosphere, heavy with threatening spirits surrounding her in gradually thickening throng, till with reeling senses she fell back fainting from fear on the pillows of her girlhood.

In truth, the old Meresia was dead, the guileless, innocent Meresia, who had dreamt youth's happy dreams in that same unaltered room. The new tenant was a woman with a sin upon her soul, and she held nothing in common with the girl of past days.

"I want to speak to you alone," said Brockbank to Serano.

"Come to my room, I am at your service," replied the Doctor lightly. "Now, what have you to say?"

"It's about Mrs. Aladros. Is she a free woman, or are you——"

José stopped the sentence with a harsh laugh.

"Good gracious, Brockbank, you surely don't intend to go in for her yourself?"

"I merely asked if she were free."

"That is a large word! Are beautiful women ever free? But if you respect yourself, my dear fellow, don't burn your wings at her candle. Man is fire, woman is tow, and the Devil comes with the bellows. Be warned in time!"

"Warned!" he muttered, "I did not come to be warned, Serano. Good-night."

"Good-night, Brockbank."

(To be continued.)

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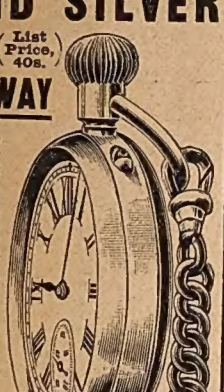

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THE result of the 1897 Coupon Collecting Competition will be found in *Pearson's Weekly* dated January 29th.

IGNORAMUS writes to ask if the temperature of a large town is any higher when all the street lamps are lit than during the daytime.——Yes, it makes a material difference, naturally.

P. H.—writes: "What is the origin of the expression 'scot-free'?"——Scot is the equivilent of the Anglo-Saxon word "sceat," meaning taxation; therefore "scot-free," originally meant "free from the payment of taxes," and now it has become a general expression for freedom from anything.

PAUL.—America is America to all the world, and is pronounced in the same way except in France, where it becomes Amérique.

D. D. wants to know why donkeys have such a strong objection to crossing running water.——The wild ass is very fond of saline herbage and drinks brackish water only. Being unaccustomed to running water, he naturally looks upon it with suspicion. *Ergo*, by the natural law of heredity, his domesticated descendant would, in all probability, inherit the aversion.

M.G.B.—Almost any Italian title can be bought by paying enough for it. A dukedom is somewhat costly, its price reaching as high as £3,200.

U. L. S.—It is quite a mistake to suppose that blinkers are an essential part of a horse's equipment. They merely became fashionable owing to the pride of persons who imagined their horses presented a finer appearance with these appendages, and custom and ignorance combined have perpetuated their use. It is the *unseen* object which terrifies a horse. The animal who will became unmanageable when made to turn away from an approaching train will quietly stand its ground if allowed to face the object.

Q.—The number of people who have lived upon this earth since the time of Adam is calculated to be somewhere about 36,627,844,600,000,000,

H. H.—Taking all the year round, the coldest hour of the twenty-four is five o'clock in the morning.

D. S.—It is quite true that giraffes are now almost priceless. They were once to be bought for £40 each, now a good one would fetch over £1,000. The Jardin d'Acclimatation of Paris some time ago refused to sell three very young ones for £2,000. Elephants, on the contrary, range from between £160 to £480.

W. W.—Yes, there is such a thing as a yearly paper, and only one; that is the *Esquimaux Bullelin*, and it is the only journal published within the Arctic Circle.

S. C. W. wants to know if rainbows are ever seen anywhere else but in the air.——Yes; they may often be noticed in the spray of fountains and of waterfalls. They are sometimes seen on the surface of the sea, and upon wet meadows lying opposite to the sun.

T. H.—The eye is the first feature to show the approach of old age in man, by the fading of the colour at the circumference of the cornea.

R. D.—The wines of ancient times were quite different to our modern wines. They were simply the product of fermentation, like our home-made currant wine or cider. Your friend is quite right in supposing that they contained alcohol, and could intoxicate if taken in sufficient quantity, but it was only a very small amount, many having none at all, and the strongest of all only twelve per cent.

A. G. M. is in the habit of catching very severe colds, accompanied by violent fits of sneezing, which, as he says, "is most embarrassing when in a crowded railway carriage or omnibus."——Perhaps the common remedy of tightly pressing the upper lip with the finger when you feel a sneeze coming on would meet your case. At all events, you might try it.

F. B. wants to know if negro babies are born black.——No. At birth a negro infant is of a reddish nut-brown colour, which turns to slatey-grey by the time it is a week old. It does not become black for a period varying from one to three years, according to the nature of the locality and the influence of the climate.

MOLAR is anxious to know the reason one's double teeth decay before the single ones.——For two reasons. In the first place, the double teeth have more work to do; nearly all the work of mastication falls upon them, which causes the enamel to wear away, thus exposing the dentine to the injurious action of the saliva and the various acids of the mouth. In the second place, the enamel is proportionately thicker on the single teeth than it is on the double.

W. B. S.—An "artel" is a Russian institution, a kind of syndicate, in fact, amongst the working men of that country. A certain number of mechanics of all descriptions join together, forming gangs, and undertake such work as railway making, dock work, agricultural work, and all kinds of skilled artisans' trades, and then share the profits between them.

S. H.—The most northerly town in the world is Hammerfest in Norway.

AN IRISHMAN wants to know why the first thing people usually do after a great mental shock is to put their hands to their heads.——Because that is where the brain is, or should be, and the brain is the headquarters of all sensation—more especially the fore-brain. It receives impressions from all parts of the body, and every sensation communicates with it, so that when a sudden shock is experienced, the disturbance is so great as to cause pain, and the hand naturally goes to the part where the pain is felt, in order to afford relief.

RODERICK.—No, the Duke of York would not inherit the title of Prince of Wales, in the event of H.R.H. dying before his mother, the Queen. Only an eldest son is entitled to be a Prince of Wales, and he is made so by Royal patent. Should Queen Victoria survive her son, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, the title would most probably fall into abeyance.

S. L. D.—The tolling of church bells on the occasion of a burial, is based on the old Pagan custom of banging gongs when a body was to be interred in order to scare away the bad spirits that were supposed to haunt the dead man in order to secure him for the lower regions.

F. M. D.—I am indeed sorry to hear that you are such a martyr to asthma. Have you seen those new patent pocket inhalers?—a most useful little article for anyone who suffers from difficulty in breathing to carry about with them, especially during the foggy weather we have had so much of this season. I believe they are obtainable from Mr. Booth, of 11c Farringdon Avenue, E.C., for the sum of five shillings.

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The BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO. strongly advise intending purchasers to send on orders at once to prevent disappointment. Orders by post must be accompanied with cuttings from this advertisement for lots required, and will receive the same attention as customers attending our warehouses, and will be executed strictly in rotation on the same day as received.

Lot 1.—4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d. These beautiful Lace Curtains, containing about 6 yards in the pair, 48in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges, with handsome double borders. Undoubtedly the cheapest ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 5s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed. — **4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d.**

7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d. Lot 2.—7s. Lace Curtains for 3s. 11d. per pair, measuring 3½yd. long, by 52in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges and handsome double borders; wash easily. 3 pairs for 11s. 3d. Money returned if not approved.

Lot 3.—Specially handsome Drawing-room Design, entirely new and most successful. In white or cream, with scolloped and taped edges, made from thoroughly sound cotton yarns; warranted to wear well. Sale price, 5s. 11d. per pair. Each Curtain measures 3½yd. long by 60in. wide. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 17s. Money returned if not approved. — **10s. 6d. Lace Curtains for 5s 11d.**

Lot 7.—**10,000 Special Extra Quality, Heavy Loom Kitchen Table Cloths**, made from the heaviest and strongest Linen Yarns. Numerous artistic patterns. Specially recommended for hard wear. Warranted to give the best possible satisfaction, being very neat, inexpensive, and durable.
Size 54in. by 45in., price 1s. 2d. each, or 3 for 3s. 3d.
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Size 62in. by 62in., price 1s. 11d. each, or 3 for 5s. 3d.
Size 68in. by 62in., price 2s. 2d. each, or 3 for 5s. 11d.

Lot 22.—10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 9d. per pair, measuring about 56in. by 76in.; light, warm, and durable. Admittedly the cheapest blankets ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 15s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned. — **10s. 6d. White Scotch Blankets for 5s. 6d.**

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Size	Weight.	Price per Pair.	3 Pairs for
53in. by 70in.	4lb.	6s. 3d.	18s.
60in. by 80in.	6lb.	7s. 9d.	22s.
70in. by 90in.	8lb.	11s. 6d.	33s.
75in. by 96in.	9lb.	13s. 0s.	37s.
80in. by 99in.	10lb.	15s. 3d.	43s.
86in. by 104in.	11lb.	16s. 9d.	48s.

Lot 20.—9s. Bleached Twill Sheets for 4s. 11d., measuring 64in. by 81in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 14s. 3d. Satisfaction guaranteed. — **9s. Twilled Sheets for 4s. 11d.**

15s. 6d. Sheets for 7s. 11d. Lot 21.—15s. 6d. Bleached Twill Sheets for 7s. 11d., measuring 90in. by 100in. Made from the best cotton yarns, thoroughly shrunk, soft, finish, and hemmed ready for use. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 22s. Money returned if not approved.

Lot 39.—1,500 yards of Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting, 36 inches wide, at 1s. 11d. per yard; usual price 3s. 6d. per yard. Can be supplied in numerous handsome and effective designs and rich colourings to harmonise with all requirements. Impossible to repeat this offer. Money returned if not approved. — **3s. 6d. Best Quality Kidderminster Carpeting for 1s. 11d.**

3s. Best Brussels Stair Carpet for 1s. 9d. Lot 48.—3s. Brussels Carpeting for 1s. 9d. per yard, 22 inches wide. Handsomely bordered, superior quality, light and dark shades, magnificent design and colourings. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned.

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Lot 50.—**THIS PHENOMENAL OFFER** is made to the readers of *Short Stories* only. On receipt of Postal Order for 6s., or 74 stamps, we will forward DIRECT FROM OUR LOOMS to your address, one of our **10/6** genuine **SEAMLESS, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE CARPETS**, suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., handsomely bordered and woven in 50 different patterns and art colourings to suit all requirements, and *large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room*. These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company BELOW THE ACTUAL COST OF PRODUCTION. They are made of material equal to wool, and, being a speciality of our own, can only be obtained Direct from our Looms, thus saving the Purchasers all Middle Profits. Over 200,000 sold during the past twelve months.

GIVEN AWAY.—With every Carpet we shall ABSOLUTELY GIVE AWAY a very handsome RUG to match: or we will send TWO CARPETS and TWO RUGS for **10/6.**

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1 Tyne View Villas, St. Helens, I. of W.

Lady Ida Lowe begs to inform the British Carpet Co. that she is so much pleased with the two Carpets and Two Rugs they sent her a week ago that she begs them to send her, to the above address, two more similar Carpets and Rugs.

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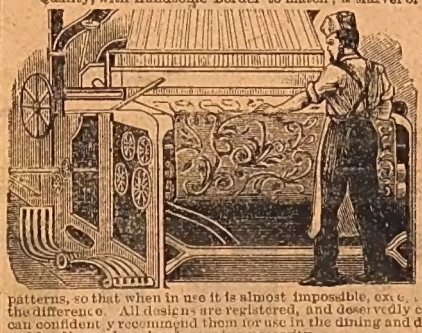

Lot 60.

No.	SIZES and PRICES. ft. in.		Sale Price.	Former Price.
1	9 0	by 6 0	5/6	9/0
2	9 0	by 7 6	7/0	11/0
3	9 0	by 9 0	8/6	13/6
4	10 6	by 7 6	8/9	13/0
5	10 6	by 9 0	10/0	15/6
6	12 0	by 9 0	11/6	18/0
7	12 0	by 10 6	13/6	20/6
8	13 6	by 10 6	15/3	24/0
9	12 0	by 12 0	15/3	24/0
10	13 6	by 12 0	17/0	27/0
11	15 0	by 12 0	19/0	32/0
12	18 0	by 12 0	22/9	36/0

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